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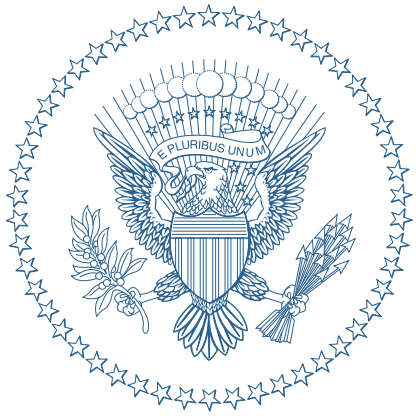
UNITED STATES

Barack Obama



2015

(IN TWO BOOKS)

BOOK I—JANUARY 1 TO JUNE 30, 2015

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Foreword

As we approached the halfway point of the fourth quarter of my Presidency, I was as optimistic as ever about our Nation's future.

Thanks to the steady and persistent work of the American people, we brought our economy back from the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression and saw the longest streak of total job growth on record—with U.S. businesses adding more than 12 million new jobs over 64 straight months of growth. Hardworking families saw their 401(k)s replenished, the housing market rebounded, and the unemployment rate continued to steadily decline, falling to 5.3 percent—down almost 50 percent from its peak. And thanks to the Affordable Care Act, more than 16 million Americans had gained the financial security of quality, affordable health insurance.

America's high school graduation rate reached an all-time high, we were producing more energy than ever before—including alternatives like wind and solar—and more States raised their minimum wage. We also continued to explore ways that science and technology can improve people's lives. For example, drawing on the power of personalized medicine, I announced the Precision Medicine Initiative to bring us closer to curing diseases like cancer and diabetes.

To build on these gains, we focused on supporting working families so they have the tools to succeed. At the start of the year, at least 43 million Americans did not get paid sick leave, which meant workers could find themselves having to choose between groceries or the rent and caring for themselves or their children. That is why I urged States and cities to take action to expand access to paid sick days and paid family leave. My Administration also launched a new initiative, TechHire, which brings employers and local governments together to support innovative job training programs like online classes, coding boot camps, and community college courses designed by local employers. And I signed two pieces of bipartisan legislation passed by the Congress that support our workers, small businesses, and environment. These new laws enable us to rewrite the rules of global trade and pass new, 21st-century trade agreements, and will renew and expand job training and other assistance to tens of thousands of American workers so that they can compete and succeed in today's economy.

In June, the Supreme Court issued historic rulings that safeguarded our progress and delivered justice for more of our fellow Americans. Five years after I signed the Affordable Care Act, advancing the principle that in America, health care is not a privilege for a few but a right for all, the Supreme Court upheld a critical part of the law. The very next day, the Court ruled that the Constitution guarantees marriage equality—in all 50 States, and for all of our citizens. This ruling—a consequence of the collective acts of courage by millions of people across decades who came out, spoke out, and believed in themselves and who they were—recognized that all people should be treated equally before the law, regardless of who they are or who they love.

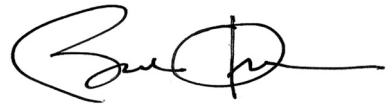
For all the extraordinary progress we had witnessed, it was clear that communities across America still faced challenges. The tensions that too often undermine the relationship between law enforcement officials and the communities they serve continued to reverberate in too many cities and towns around our country. My Administration took action to implement some of the recommendations put forth by my Task Force on 21st Century Policing. We launched the Police Data Initiative to improve trust and increase transparency by bringing localities together to promote knowledge sharing, community-sourced problem solving, and data analysis. We also released new policies aimed at ensuring State and local law enforcement agencies were being responsible and accountable with their use of Federally-funded military-style equipment. Being a police officer takes a special kind of courage, and the overwhelming majority are fair and honest public servants. By encouraging community policing—matching the courage of police with the compassion and understanding of the citizens they protect—we can help keep everyone safe.

For all we had achieved, we experienced painful tragedies as well. In January, terrorism touched the heartland of America's oldest ally, when Paris suffered a shooting at the offices of its Charlie Hebdo magazine. The United States stood shoulder to shoulder with France in the aftermath of the

attack, and together we reaffirmed our joint commitment to fighting terrorists who threaten our shared security and the world. Just over one month after the attack, the White House hosted a Summit on Countering Violent Extremism to address the challenge of countering violent extremism and the ideologies that fuel it, and defeating those who advance it, including the terrorist group ISIL.

Tragedy struck here at home when, in June, nine people lost their lives in a horrific act of hatred—a shooting at the Mother Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, South Carolina. I traveled to Charleston in the wake of the attack to mourn the beautiful souls we lost and to reflect on the power of God's grace to heal our wounds and bring our people together. Though the perpetrator sought to divide our Nation and inflame old tensions rooted in our Nation's original sin, America—guided by the example of forgiveness by the victims' families—responded with grace.

As we enter the second half of the year and reflect on how far we had come, I am confident that the future ahead is bright. Through trial and triumph, the American people have only reaffirmed my faith in the power of ordinary citizens to bring about real and lasting progress. The task we started 6 years ago—that of picking ourselves up, dusting ourselves off, and beginning again the work of remaking America—is at last being fulfilled. And I have as much hope as ever before for the world our children and grandchildren will inherit.



Preface

This book contains the papers and speeches of the President of the United States that were issued by the Office of the Press Secretary during the period January 1–June 30, 2015. The material has been compiled and published by the Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration.

The material is presented in chronological order, and the dates shown in the headings are the dates of the documents or events. In instances when the release date differs from the date of the document itself, that fact is shown in the textnote. Every effort has been made to ensure accuracy: Remarks are checked against an audio recording, and signed documents are checked against the original. Textnotes and cross references have been provided by the editors for purposes of identification or clarity. Speeches were delivered in Washington, DC, unless otherwise indicated. The times noted are local times. All materials that are printed in full text in the book have been indexed in the subject and name indexes and listed in the document categories list.

The Public Papers of the Presidents series was begun in 1957 in response to a recommendation of the National Historical Publications Commission. An extensive compilation of messages and papers of the Presidents covering the period 1789 to 1897 was assembled by James D. Richardson and published under congressional authority between 1896 and 1899. Since then, various private compilations have been issued, but there was no uniform publication comparable to the Congressional Record or the United States Supreme Court Reports. Many Presidential papers could be found only in the form of mimeographed White House releases or as reported in the press. The Commission therefore recommended the establishment of an official series in which Presidential writings, addresses, and remarks of a public nature could be made available.

The Commission's recommendation was incorporated in regulations of the Administrative Committee of the Federal Register, issued under section 6 of the Federal Register Act (44 U.S.C. 1506), which may be found in title 1, part 10, of the Code of Federal Regulations.

A companion publication to the Public Papers series, the Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents, was begun in 1965 to provide a broader range of Presidential materials on a more timely basis to meet the needs of the contemporary reader. Beginning with the administration of Jimmy Carter, the Public Papers series expanded its coverage to include additional material as printed in the Weekly Compilation. On January 20, 2009, the printed Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents was superseded by the online Daily Compilation of Presidential Documents. The Daily Compilation provides a listing of the President's daily schedule and meetings, when announced, and other items of general interest issued by the Office of the Press Secretary.

Also included in the printed edition are lists of the President's nominations submitted to the Senate, materials released by the Office of the Press Secretary that are not printed in full text in the book, and proclamations, Executive orders, and other Presidential documents released by the Office of the Press Secretary and published in the *Federal Register*. This information appears in the appendixes at the end of the book.

Volumes covering the administrations of Presidents Herbert Hoover, Harry S. Truman, Dwight D. Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson, Richard Nixon, Gerald R. Ford, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, William J. Clinton, and George W. Bush are also included in the Public Papers series.

The Public Papers of the Presidents publication program is under the direction of John Hyrum Martinez, Director of the Publications and Services Division, Office of the Federal

Register. The series is produced by the Presidential and Legislative Publications Unit, Kimberly Tilliman, Supervisor. The Chief Editor of this book was Joseph K. Vetter; the Managing Editor was Joshua H. Liberatore, assisted by Amelia E. Otovo.

The frontispiece and photographs used in the portfolio were supplied by the White House Photo Office. The typography and design of the book were developed by the Government Publishing Office under the direction of Hugh N. Halpern, Director.

Oliver A. Potts
Director of the Federal Register

David S. Ferriero
Archivist of the United States

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Cabinet

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Secretary of State	John F. Kerry
Secretary of the Treasury	Jacob J. Lew
Secretary of Defense	Charles T. Hagel (resigned February 12) Ashton B. Carter (confirmed February 12)
Attorney General	Eric H. Holder, Jr. (resigned April 23) Loretta E. Lynch (confirmed April 23)
Secretary of the Interior	Sarah M.R. "Sally" Jewell
Secretary of Agriculture	Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary of Commerce	Penny S. Pritzker
Secretary of Labor	Thomas E. Perez
Secretary of Health and Human Services	Sylvia Mathews Burwell
Secretary of Housing and Urban Development	Julián Castro
Secretary of Transportation	Anthony R. Foxx
Secretary of Energy	Ernest J. Moniz
Secretary of Education	Arne Duncan
Secretary of Veterans Affairs	Robert A. McDonald
Secretary of Homeland Security	Jeh C. Johnson
Chief of Staff	Denis R. McDonough
Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency	Regina McCarthy
United States Trade Representative	Michael B. Froman

Director of the Office of Management and Budget	Shaun L.S. Donovan
Chair of the Council of Economic Advisers	Jason L. Furman
United States Permanent Representative to the United Nations	Samantha Power
Administrator of the Small Business Administration	Maria Contreras-Sweet

Administration of Barack Obama

2015

Statement on the Death of Former Governor Mario M. Cuomo of New York
January 1, 2015

Michelle and I were saddened to learn of the passing of former New York Governor Mario Cuomo. An Italian Catholic kid from Queens, born to immigrant parents, Mario paired his faith in God and faith in America to live a life of public service, and we are all better for it. He rose to be chief executive of the State he loved, a determined champion of progressive values, and an unflinching voice for tolerance, inclusiveness, fairness, dignity, and opportunity. His own story taught him that as Americans, we are bound together as one people and our country's success rests on the success of all of us, not just a fortunate few. Michelle and I extend our deepest condolences to Mario's wife Matilda; his children, Governor Andrew Cuomo, Maria, Margaret, Madeline, and Chris; and his family, friends, and New Yorkers who loved him dearly.

NOTE: The statement referred to Maria Cuomo Cole, daughter of former Gov. Cuomo.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Imposing Additional Sanctions With Respect to North Korea
January 2, 2015

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Pursuant to the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701 *et seq.*) (IEEPA), I hereby report that I have issued an Executive Order (the "order") with respect to North Korea that expands the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13466 of June 26, 2008, expanded in scope in Executive Order 13551 of August 30, 2010, and relied upon for additional steps in Executive Order 13570 of April 18, 2011. The order takes additional steps to address North Korea's continued actions that threaten the United States and others.

In 2008, upon terminating the exercise of certain authorities under the Trading With the Enemy Act (TWEA) with respect to North Korea, the President issued Executive Order 13466 and declared a national emergency pursuant to IEEPA to deal with the unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States posed by the existence and risk of the proliferation of weapons-usable fissile material on the Korean Peninsula. Executive Order 13466 continued certain restrictions on North Korea and North Korean nationals that had been in place under TWEA.

In 2010, I issued Executive Order 13551. In that order, I determined that the Government of North Korea's continued provocative actions destabilized the Korean peninsula and imperiled U.S. Armed Forces, allies, and trading partners in the region and warranted the imposition of additional sanctions, and I expanded the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13466. In Executive Order 13551, I ordered blocked the property and interests in property of three North Korean entities and one individual listed in the Annex to that order and provided criteria under which the Secretary of the Treasury, in consultation with the Secretary of State, may designate additional persons whose property and interests in property shall be blocked.

In 2011, I issued Executive Order 13570 to further address the national emergency with respect to North Korea and to strengthen the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1718 and 1874. That Executive Order prohibited the direct or indirect importation of goods, services, and technology from North Korea.

I have now determined that that the provocative, destabilizing, and repressive actions and policies of the Government of North Korea, including its destructive, coercive cyber-related actions during November and December 2014, actions in violation of United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1718, 1874, 2087, and 2094, and commission of serious human rights abuses, constitute a continuing threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States.

The order is not targeted at the people of North Korea, but rather is aimed at the Government of North Korea and its activities that threaten the United States and others. The order leaves in place all existing sanctions imposed under Executive Orders 13466, 13551, and 13570. It provides criteria for blocking the property and interests in property of any person determined by the Secretary of the Treasury, in consultation with the Secretary of State:

- to be an agency, instrumentality, or controlled entity of the Government of North Korea or the Workers' Party of Korea;
- to be an official of the Government of North Korea;
- to be an official of the Workers' Party of Korea;
- to have materially assisted, sponsored, or provided financial, material, or technological support for, or goods or services to or in support of, the Government of North Korea or any person whose property and interests in property are blocked pursuant to the order; or
- to be owned or controlled by, or to have acted or purported to act for or on behalf of, directly or indirectly, the Government of North Korea or any person whose property and interests in property are blocked pursuant to the order.

In addition, the order suspends entry into the United States of any alien determined to meet one or more of the above criteria.

I have delegated to the Secretary of the Treasury the authority, in consultation with the Secretary of State, to take such actions, including the promulgation of rules and regulations, and to employ all powers granted to the President by IEEPA, as may be necessary to carry out the purposes of the order. All executive agencies are directed to take all appropriate measures within their authority to carry out the provisions of the order.

I am enclosing a copy of the Executive Order I have issued.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to John A. Boehner, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate. The Executive order is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Statement on the Death of Former Senator Edward W. Brooke III
January 3, 2015

Michelle and I were saddened to learn of the passing of former Senator Edward Brooke. Senator Brooke led an extraordinary life of public service, including his time in the U.S. Army. As the first African American elected as a State's attorney general and first African American U.S. Senator elected after reconstruction, Ed Brooke stood at the forefront of the battle for civil rights and economic fairness. During his time in elected office, he sought to build consensus and understanding across partisan lines, always working towards practical solutions to our Nation's challenges. We express our deepest sympathies to his wife Anne, children Remi, Edwina, Edward, stepdaughter Melanie, family, friends, and the people of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

NOTE: The statement referred to Remi C. Goldstone and Edwina H. Petit, daughters, and Melanie Laflamme, stepdaughter, of former Sen. Brooke.

Statement on the Death of Stuart O. Scott
January 4, 2015

I will miss Stuart Scott. Twenty years ago, Stu helped usher in a new way to talk about our favorite teams and the day's best plays. For much of those 20 years, public service and campaigns have kept me from my family. But wherever I went, I could flip on the TV and Stu and his colleagues on "SportsCenter" were there. Over the years, he entertained us, and in the end, he inspired us with courage and love. Michelle and I offer our thoughts and prayers to his family, friends, and colleagues.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Enrique Peña Nieto of Mexico
January 6, 2015

President Obama. Well, welcome, everybody. *Feliz año nuevo.* It is a pleasure to welcome once again President Peña Nieto, as well as his delegation. It's appropriate that our first meeting of the year is with one of our closest allies, neighbors, and friends.

Obviously, the bonds between Mexico and the United States are long and deep, not only because of the economic ties and strategic ties between our two countries, but most importantly, because of the people-to-people and cultural ties between our people—between our two countries. And this meeting has given us an opportunity to continue to find ways to deepen those bonds.

We've discussed something that is uppermost on the minds of most Mexicans and Americans, and that is, creating economic growth and jobs and prosperity. I've congratulated President Peña Nieto on some of his structural reforms that I think will unleash even further the enormous potential of the Mexican economy. And we also have discussed how we can continue to work on issues like clean energy, scientific and educational exchanges, improving cross-border commerce, and continue to strengthen the kinds of mutual investment and trade that creates jobs both in Mexico and the United States.

We also discussed the issues of security. And obviously, we've been following here in the United States some of the tragic events surrounding the students whose lives were lost. And President Peña Nieto was able to describe to me the reform program that he's initiated around these issues. Our commitment is to be a friend and supporter of Mexico in its efforts to eliminate the scourge of violence and the drug cartels that are responsible for so much tragedy inside of Mexico. And we want to be a good partner in that process, recognizing that ultimately, it will be up to Mexico and its law enforcement to carry out the key decisions that need to be made.

I described to President Peña Nieto our efforts to fix our broken immigration system here in the United States and to strengthen our borders as well. I very much appreciate Mexico's efforts in addressing the unaccompanied children who we saw spiking during the summer. In part because of strong efforts by Mexico, including at its southern border, we've seen those numbers reduced back to much more manageable levels. But one of the things that we both agreed on is our continued need to work with Central American governments so that we can address some of the social and economic challenges there that led to that spike in unaccompanied children.

And at the same time, we very much appreciate Mexican—Mexico's commitment to work with us to send a very clear message around

the executive actions that I'm taking that we are going to provide a mechanism so that families are not separated who have been here for a long time. But we're also going to be much more aggressive at the border in ensuring that people come through the system legally. And the Mexican Government has been very helpful in how we can process and message that effectively both inside of the United States and in Mexico.

And finally, we had the chance to discuss—and we'll continue to discuss during lunch—some of the regional and international issues in which Mexico has been a very significant leader. I described my initiative to end the 50-year policy with relation to Cuba, to move towards what we hope will be a more constructive policy, but one that continues to emphasize human rights and democracy and political freedom. And at the Summit of the Americas, one of the things I informed Peña Nieto is, we will participate, but we'll insist that those topics are on the agenda.

And just as Mexico has been helpful on issues like Cuba, Mexico has also been a genuine leader internationally on issues like climate change. And so I very much appreciate the leadership of the Mexican Government and President Peña Nieto on these issues. I look forward to our collaboration in 2015, and I wish all the people of Mexico a very happy and healthy and prosperous 2015.

President Peña Nieto. Thank you very much, Mr. President. I first of all want to thank you, President Obama, for your hospitality in this, my first visit as President of the United Mexican States in the White House. And this is right at the beginning of this year 2015. And we, of course, both of us share the desire for it to be a great year for North America and the whole world and very especially for the relationship we've been building between Mexico and the United States, a relationship which is mainly based on friendship, cordiality, mutual respect, shared interest for prosperity and development for our nations.

First of all, in terms of the topics you have already shared with the press, first of all, I have made acknowledgement of the very intelligent and audacious decision of your administration regarding the executive action for immigration, who is, of course, an act of justice for people who arrived from other parts of the world, but are now part of the U.S. community. And among the population that will surely be benefited through your executive action, sir, there's a very big majority of Mexican citizens.

And I have shared two fundamental topics on this item. The first measure is the support the Mexican Government is ready to give to the Mexican population living in the United States so that they can show the documentation that is necessary to prove that they have been in the United States before 2010 and also, of course, to have all the other requirements that are demanded for the Mexican population to be benefited through the executive action.

And first of all, yesterday we announced that Mexican migrants in the United States are going to be able to get their birth certificates without having to go to Mexico. They are going to be able to get this very important document. And of course, another very important factor that we've discussed is for Mexico to be doing everything it can so that this measure will only be benefiting those people that are supposed to be benefited and for it not to generate any misinformation or abuses, especially of the organized crime groups, groups that are doing human trafficking, and that they will be encouraging the type of migration which is exactly the type we don't want to have. And we will maintain the greater control of the southern border to continue having orderly migration and to avoid the items that I have just mentioned.

And among the multithematic agenda that we have between our two countries, one of the important items is modernizing border crossings between both nations. And this is something we've been working on because we want all these measures to be very visible and very tangible, the results of all those measures. For instance, let me inform you that we've been working on modernizing our border crossings so that we can have faster, more expeditious

trade and also the crossing of people, that this may take place in a very orderly fashion.

And there are different projects. Some of them have already been finished; others are in the process of implementation. And this, of course, constitutes less crossing time in terms of the transit of people and of goods through our borders.

And another very important topic of this multithematic agenda is continue favoring trade among both nations. We want to continue promoting investments, as it's already happening in our country, first of all, because we believe that these investments can be so helpful, and we want to continue having American investors in Mexico because this is an example of the way they recognize that Mexico is a trustworthy destination, a place where they can invest. And this is something we are going to continue to doing.

Yes, and as part of this multithematic agenda that we have, I wanted to share other results with you: for instance, the exchange of students. This exchange is increasing students from both countries, and this is very, very important for us. And the next item would be supporting our entrepreneurs, and this is very important for us to increase trade.

And I thank you, President Obama, for your willingness to continue working with Mexico in terms of security, especially in this clear challenge Mexico has to continue fighting organized crime. And here, we've been discussing topics that have to do with security, of course, and the collaboration, the exchange of information, and the logistics support that we're already getting. And I want to thank you, President Obama, for offering to continue these very efficient actions for us to fight insecurity and especially organized crime.

And finally, I have also made an acknowledgement in terms of the very audacious decisions that you have made to reestablish diplomatic relations with Cuba, with President Castro, and your countries. And we have offered our desire, our hope, to collaborate in this effort so that as soon as possible, you can continue with this reestablishment of relations with Cuba and that you can accomplish all the purposes you have set up to accomplish.

And Mexico will be a tireless supporter of the good relationship between two neighbors. This is the neighbor in the Caribbean, the neighbor in north of Mexico, Cuba, and the United States.

And I would finally like to thank you for your openness, for your willingness, your always very cordial and frank tone, President Obama, to continue to building a relationship between both nations of friends, mutual respect, to continue promoting the development of our countries.

I have already congratulated you for this happy new year, but this is for your family, President Obama, for your society, and for you, yourself, for this to be a great 2015.

President Obama. Okay. Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:30 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. President Peña Nieto spoke in Spanish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Joint Statement—United States-Mexico High-Level Economic Dialogue
January 6, 2015

When President Barack Obama and President Enrique Peña Nieto announced the creation of the United States-Mexico High-Level Economic Dialogue (HLED) in May 2013, they established a new strategic vision for our economic cooperation, focused on delivering tangible and positive economic benefits to the people of the United States and Mexico. Our robust cooperation and dedication to finding binational solutions to shared economic challenges strengthens both of our countries and creates opportunities for our citizens. As neighbors and partners, we will continue to position North America as the most competitive and dynamic region in the world.

The first HLED meeting took place in Mexico City on September 20th, 2013. Today, Vice President Joe Biden hosted the second Cabinet-level meeting in Washington, DC to continue advancing our shared interests, strengthen our close and productive bilateral economic and commercial ties, enhance competitiveness, create additional trade and economic opportunities, and promote increased regional and global cooperation.

The benefits of our economic integration are clear, with more than $500 billion in bilateral trade per year, and over $100 billion in cross-border investment. U.S. and Mexican companies understand the value of our integrated economy, and have designed their productive processes accordingly, making full use of our competitive advantages and geographical proximity. Today, we build things together and many finished products exported by our countries reflect this high level of co-production. Our joint efforts through the HLED build on this important foundation by promoting regional integration and competitiveness, improving connectivity, and fostering economic growth, productivity, entrepreneurship, and innovation.

Mexico and the United States also are close partners in the negotiation of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) agreement, an historic undertaking intended to boost economic growth, development, and prosperity, and support additional jobs in both countries. We have made significant progress over the past year in setting the stage to finalize a high-standard and comprehensive agreement. With the end coming into focus, the United States, Mexico and the other 10 TPP countries are strongly committed to moving the negotiations forward to conclusion as soon as possible. The substantial new opportunities for U.S. and Mexican exporters that the TPP will offer will be enhanced by our work together in the HLED.

Promoting Competitiveness and Connectivity

In 2014, the United States and Mexico made significant strides regarding mechanisms for transportation and communications infrastructure planning and development. These mechanisms have directly facilitated the freight flow over the border, reduced bottlenecks, and improved logistics for cross-border trade. Faster, more efficient and closer links are helping boost our competitiveness. Our two governments concluded, in November 2014, the negotiation of a new air services agreement that will benefit travelers, shippers, airlines, and the economies of Mexico and the United States with competitive pricing and more convenient air services. The new agreement will enter into force once the approval processes of the two countries are finalized.

To reduce bottlenecks to trade at the border, we have worked to expand capacity at our ports of entry. At the El Chaparral-San Ysidro Port of Entry between San Diego and Tijuana, the busiest land crossing in the world, new construction has reduced wait times from three hours to approximately 30 minutes. In Nogales, Arizona, we doubled inspection capacity at the primary entry point of Mexican produce into the United States, making it faster and more efficient. The Mexican side of the Tijuana Airport Pedestrian Facility is about to be completed and the U.S. side is scheduled to be finished by the end of 2015.

We continue to work expeditiously on other priority ports of entry to facilitate the movement of both people and goods. We commend the work of the 21st Century Border Management Initiative, including its efforts to track and push forward new and improved border infrastructure at 13 border crossings. We are expediting the movement of goods and expanding supply chain security through a new mutual recognition arrangement between our trusted trader programs and the harmonization of data requirements for northbound rail shipments. We are also beginning to look at options to facilitate the crossing of oversized equipment necessary for exploration and production of energy.

Travel and tourism between the United States and Mexico is an important source of jobs, income, and cultural exchange between the two countries. The HLED established the Travel and Tourism Working Group to promote increased travel and tourism and better

travel experiences through increased knowledge of tourism flows. During 2014, the Group worked to improve the exchange of data, including statistics, tourism flows, market intelligence, stakeholders, and the economic benefits of these efforts. Our two countries have increased cooperation to manage more efficiently our telecommunications systems along the border, supporting both nations' goals of accelerating mobile broadband services. The United States also has provided legal and regulatory expertise to Mexico's new telecommunications regulator to support Mexico's goals of creating a competitive, market-based regulatory landscape more conducive for telecommunications investment.

Building a Modern, Innovative Knowledge Economy

The future competitiveness of our region depends on our ability to foster innovation, provide our citizens access to high quality education, and to promote a workforce with the skills necessary to succeed in the global economy. Together, we initiated the mapping of vibrant cross-border economic clusters, aiding our nations' ability to produce high-value products and services dependent on the innovation and linkages that these clusters generate. Under the Mexico-U.S. Entrepreneurship and Innovation Council (MUSEIC) launched in 2013, we formally signed agreements for U.S.-Mexican collaboration as a part of the Small Business Network of the Americas; held conferences and events designed to improve access to finance for businesses; and launched entrepreneurship training sessions. We continue to seek ways to link U.S. and Mexican small businesses interested in international trade, developing strategic partnerships and sharing best practices.

Both our governments also recognize women's empowerment and participation in economic affairs are crucial. Mexico and the United States have finalized an Action Plan for the U.S. Mexico Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the Promotion of Gender Equality, the Empowerment of Women and Women's Human Rights. Additionally, Mexico joined the Equal Futures Partnership and in September 2014 presented its national Action Plan to comply with the objectives of the Partnership. Also, under MUSEIC, we found ways to increasingly integrate women into growing economic sectors by creating networks of female entrepreneurs, mentoring projects, training programs and the creating a guarantee fund to ease women's access to financing. Finally, the Mexican Secretariat of Labor and Social Welfare is working closely with the U.S. Department of Labor on a project aimed at implementing the new Mexican Federal Labor Law to prevent gender and sexual orientation discrimination in employment in Mexico. We are also actively engaging in discussions to eliminate regulatory divergences to reduce red tape and help businesses on both sides of the border.

The United States and Mexico have made a joint commitment to workforce development including quality post-secondary science, technology, engineering, and math education through the Bilateral Forum on Higher Education, Innovation, and Research (FOBESII). The Forum was officially launched by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Mexico and the Secretary of State of the United States, in Mexico City on May 21st, 2014. More than 450 U.S. and Mexican partners from government, academia, civil society and the private sector participated in developing the FOBESII's Action Plan and four binational working groups were created to implement it.

Our two governments have also pledged to increase international educational exchanges in line with the United States' 100,000 Strong in the Americas Initiative and Mexico's Proyecta 100,000. In the past year alone, the Government of Mexico, with the collaboration of the U.S. Embassy in Mexico, facilitated the travel of 27,000 Mexican students and teachers to the United States. Higher Education Institutions and Research Centers of both countries have signed more than 23 new educational agreements. We also have created new bilateral innovation and research consortia and boosted collaborations such as the High Altitude Cherenkov Observatory (HAWC), which will be

inaugurated in March 2015. In addition, last October, and under the joint leadership of both governments, we launched the binational webpage *Mobilitas* to promote academic opportunities in both the United States and Mexico.

The National Science Foundation (NSF) and the National Science and Technology Council of Mexico (CONACYT) have strengthened their bilateral collaboration and scientific research partnerships, through FOBESII. We are also working together on both sides of the border to prevent abuses within the temporary worker system to facilitate the safe exchange of human capital within North America, through projects such as the pilot program between Mexico's Secretary of Labor (STPS) and the Government of California.

Advancing Together—Our 2015 Strategic Goals

We look forward to advancing our work in 2015 in six key areas—energy; modern borders; work force development; regulatory cooperation; partnering in regional and global leadership; and stakeholder engagement.

- *Energy.* We will deepen energy sector cooperation between our countries—in areas such as sharing best practices for regulation in areas of common interests including cross-border energy development and transmission, ensuring high safety standards, and protecting the environment, enhancing our ability to collaborate on publicly available energy information, and promoting investment in workforce, safety and technological innovation—in order to ensure access to low cost and cleaner sources of energy for our citizens, resilient energy infrastructure, and a strong North American energy market. We are convinced that a more integrated and efficient regional energy sector that relies on enhanced energy cooperation will play a crucial role in boosting North America's competitiveness and leadership in the years to come.
- *Modern Border.* We are determined to make our border, where each day $1.5 billion in two-way trade and more than 400,000 people legally cross between the United States and Mexico, a source of shared economic opportunity. We will continue to coordinate closely as we improve our border infrastructure by building new facilities and modernizing old crossings. We will also continue work to harmonize our data requirements to facilitate our customs processes in all modes of transportation. We will initiate operations of three new facilities: the West Rail Bypass in Matamoros, Tamaulipas-Brownsville, Texas; the Guadalupe-Tornillo Port of Entry in Chihuahua-Texas and the Tijuana Airport Pedestrian Facility, as well as progress on the proposed Otay II border crossing in the Tijuana-San Diego border region. We will work to implement the Mutual Recognition Arrangement between our respective trusted trader programs and continue joint efforts to facilitate the secure flow of travelers between our countries.
- *Workforce Development.* The knowledge economy is the key to competitiveness in the 21st Century. Therefore, it is fundamental to develop a workforce that is familiar with and responsive to economic priorities. Collaboration on this issue will benefit both our businesses and our people. Global abilities such as language acquisition, teamwork, and cross-cultural skills are essential elements for success in today's economy. The United States and Mexico will advance the ambitious goal of sending 100,000 Mexican students to the United States and receiving 50,000 U.S. students in Mexico by 2018, and will support university research partnerships to build upon our shared intellectual capital. Our two governments will contribute to our broader workforce development goals in key sectors such as energy, technology, and advanced manufacturing, through FOBESII and MUSEIC. We will work together on strategic issues through the Academies of Engineering and Science of both countries. Our gov-

ernments look forward to working more closely with the private sector on both sides of the border in promoting internships and collaborating with universities to meet the training and education needs of the future.

- *Regulatory Cooperation.* To strengthen our region's economic integration, we will pursue regulatory cooperation activities in such areas as energy, food safety, and transportation to facilitate cross-border trade and co-production, and reduce regulatory barriers to businesses on both sides of the border.
- *Regional and Global Leadership.* Our governments and citizens are working jointly in many strategic and institutional areas that further strengthen our bilateral ties, as well as our relationship with other countries and regions in the globalized economy. We are working together to enhance government transparency under the Open Government Partnership, chaired this year by both the Mexican government and civil society. In 2015, we will continue to work together toward open government, open budgets, transparency and anti-corruption measures, demonstrate our commitments to progress in implementing the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, and will serve on each other's peer review teams in our respective G–20 Fossil Fuel Subsidy Peer Reviews. We will partner to promote inclusive and sustainable growth and development in Central America and the Caribbean, including in strategic areas such as energy and risk management. We will continue to work closely together in pursuit of a 2015 climate change agreement that is effective, durable, and applicable to all Parties, including by submitting ambitious post-2020 mitigation targets and by working together through technical cooperation and information exchange on how best to implement our shared climate objectives, before and after 2020.
- *Stakeholder Engagement.* Outreach and stakeholder engagement remain fundamental components of the HLED and one of its most innovative aspects. We carefully consider the input and opinions of all of our stakeholders in formulating the goals of our Economic Dialogue. The government officials most involved with the HLED have also held several meetings with members of the private and academic sectors to get feedback on what they consider fundamental to making North America the most competitive and dynamic region. Ensuring this close dialogue remains will not only bring effectiveness and legitimacy to our joint work, but will also ensure it remains relevant, dynamic, pragmatic and appropriately focused. We are convinced that these must remain part of our joint agenda, if we are to deliver a more competitive and stronger North America.

NOTE: The joint statement referred to Secretary of Foreign Relations Jose Antonio Meade Kuribrena and Secretary of Labor and Social Welfare Alfonso Navarrete Prida of Mexico. An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Remarks at a Meeting With Members of the Executive Committee of the National Governors Association and an Exchange With Reporters
January 6, 2015

The President. Well, it is wonderful to welcome four of the members of the executive committee of the National Governors Association, including our chair here, John Hickenlooper, a good friend from Colorado, as well as the vice chair, Gary Herbert, from Utah.

And one of the things I've consistently said is that Governors don't always have the luxury

to operate based on ideology and a bunch of abstract arguments. They've got to get things done, and people expect them to deliver regardless of their party affiliation. And I know the National Governors Association and the executive committee recognizes that what the American people expect from all of us is to deliver jobs and growth and health and prosperity and to work with them to create businesses and to move America forward.

The good news is that over the last several years, after one of the most wrenching economic crises that we've had in our lifetimes, America has moved forward. We now have the strongest job growth of any time since the 1990s. Manufacturing has come surging back. We have seen almost every economic indicator improve, in some ways improve dramatically. The deficit at the Federal level is now down by almost two-thirds. Health care costs are going up at their slowest rate in over 50 years. Education scores are up. High school graduation rates are up. College attendance is up. Our energy production is unparalleled at this point, both clean energy and traditional energy sources.

So we are poised to really build on that success in 2015. But it does require us to continue to make some good choices and, most importantly, to work together. So I'm looking forward to an opportunity to hearing the ideas of my fellow Governors—or these Governors, my fellow executives, about what they think needs to happen at the State level and how the Federal Government can be their most effective partner.

I know, in the past, infrastructure has been something that people are very interested in, making sure that there's more regulatory flexibility and smart regulation so that we're not impeding innovation and growth. I think there's enormous interest in job training and how we can continue to partner with businesses and community colleges and all the assets that we have to get people on the pipeline for jobs that are going to pay a good wage.

And a lot of these are issues and themes that I'll be talking about in my State of the Union. In fact, I'm going to be traveling, starting tomorrow. I'm going to Detroit to talk about more things we can do to promote advanced manufacturing and innovation in our research base. I'll be going to Arizona to talk about how we can continue to strengthen our housing market that's come bouncing back, but still has a ways to go. And then, I'll be in Tennessee, where I have a chance to talk about some real innovation that's taking place to make higher education more affordable and a better value for young people.

So my main message to these Governors is going to be, let's figure out how to work together. And that's the same message that I'm going to have for Congress. I don't have to run for election again, but I intend, over the next 2 years, to do everything I can to make sure that the American people are even better off 2 years from now as they are today.

So, Mr. Chairman, do you want to just say something quick?

Governor John W. Hickenlooper of Colorado. Well, we're just grateful for the opportunity to sit down and share ideas and really find ways to work together more effectively. And when we met last year and you made a commitment to help us cut some of the redtape and begin to help us on a variety of fronts—education, health care, down the line—and then we saw results, that's really what it's about. And we appreciate that as Democrats and Republicans that we're all here and really, in a nonpartisan way.

Governors generally end up being a lot less partisan——

The President. Right.

Gov. Hickenlooper. ——on a day-to-day basis than Congress does, and I think our commitment to you is that we're going to roll up our sleeves and say, all right, over these next couple of years, let's do everything we can to make this country better and better.

The President. Good. All right, everybody, thanks so much. Stay warm——

Speaker of the House of Representatives John A. Boehner/Senate Majority Leader A. Mitchell McConnell/Bipartisanship

Q. Mr. President——

The President. Stay warm out there.

Q. ——any message for Mitch McConnell and John Boehner today as Congress comes back?

The President. I want to congratulate them once again on their positions as Speaker and Majority Leader in the Senate, and I'm very much looking forward to working with them. I already had a chance to say happy New Year to them. And I'm confident that there are going to be areas where we disagree and there will be some pitched battles, but I'm also confident that there are enormous areas of potential agreement that would deliver for the American people, and we just have to make sure that we focus on those areas where we can make significant progress together.

So I wish them well and——

Q. Did you speak with them today or earlier?

The President. I wish them well, and I think we're going to actually have, hopefully, a productive 2015.

All right? Thanks, guys.

Former Governor Robert F. McDonnell of Virginia

Q. Governor McDonnell sentenced to 2 years. Did you—have you heard that? And do you have any comment on that?

The President. I haven't heard that, and I have no comment on it.

Q. On Keystone——

The President. Thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:54 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Mark B. Dayton of Minnesota; and Gov. Patrick L. McCrory of North Carolina.

Remarks on the Terrorist Attack in Paris, France, During a Meeting With Vice President Joe Biden and Secretary of State John F. Kerry
January 7, 2015

I've reached out to President Hollande of France and hope to have the opportunity to talk to him today. But I thought it was appropriate for me to express my deepest sympathies to the people of Paris and the people of France for the terrible terrorist attack that took place earlier today.

I think that all of us recognize that France is one of our oldest allies, our strongest allies. They have been with us at every moment when we've—from 9/11 on, in dealing with some of the terrorist organizations around the world that threaten us. For us to see the kind of cowardly, evil attacks that took place today, I think, reinforces once again why it's so important for us to stand in solidarity with them, just as they stand in solidarity with us.

The fact that this was an attack on journalists, an attack on our free press, also underscores the degree to which these terrorists fear freedom: of speech and freedom of the press. But the one thing that I'm very confident about is that the values that we share with the French people, a belief—a universal belief in freedom of expression, is something that can't be silenced because of the senseless violence of the few.

And so our counterterrorism cooperation with France is excellent. We will provide them with every bit of assistance that we can going forward. I think it's going to be important for us to make sure that we recognize, these kinds of attacks can happen anywhere in the world. And one of the things I'll be discussing with Secretary Kerry today is to make sure that we remain vigilant not just with respect to Americans living in Paris, but Americans living in Europe and in the Middle East and other parts of the world, and making sure that we stay vigilant in trying to protect them and to hunt down and bring the perpetrators of this specific act to justice and to roll up the networks that help to advance these kinds of plots.

In the end, though, the most important thing I want to say is that our thoughts and prayers are with the families of those who have

been lost in France and with the people of Paris and the people of France. What that beautiful city represents—the culture and the civilization that is so central to our imaginations—that's going to endure. And those who carry out senseless attacks against innocent civilians, ultimately, they'll be forgotten. And we will stand with the people of France through this very, very difficult time.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:18 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Remarks at the Ford Motor Company Michigan Assembly Plant in Wayne, Michigan
January 7, 2015

The President. Thank you, everybody! Give Mia a big round of applause for that outstanding introduction. Well, hello, Michigan! Happy New Year to everybody.

Audience members. Happy New Year!

Audience member. I love you!

The President. I—what was that?

Audience member. Love you, man.

The President. I love you back. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank all the outstanding leaders that we've got here today. I want to introduce some of them. We've got Secretary of Labor Tom Perez here. We've got Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan here. Senator Gary Peters is in the house. Congresswoman Debbie Dingell is here. Your outstanding CEO, Mark Fields, is here.

Now, I have to say, I love the Secret Service, I love the Beasts that they put me in and—that's what we call the cars I drive in, "the Beasts." So I like my ride these days. And it was made in Michigan too. But I just had a chance to look at these new Mustangs, and I've got to say that the Mustangs had a little more style, a little more flavor. [*Laughter*]

Bill Ford is in the house. Surprisingly enough, we talked a little bit about Sunday. [*Laughter*] Now, listen, I'm a Bears fan. You beat us twice. But even a Bears fan has to admit——

Audience member. We got hosed!

The President. ——that that was a little suspect. I have never seen anything like that before. I would have been pretty irritated. Were you irritated? Oh, yes. [*Laughter*] But all I can say—because I'm used to saying this, I'm a Bears fan—there's always next year. [*Laughter*] And look, you've got a lot to be hopeful for. First of all, you've got one of the best defenses in the league. A fine young quarterback, Megatron. And if there's one thing that you can take to the bank when talking about Detroit is that Detroit always comes back. [*Applause*] Detroit always comes back.

And that's why I'm here today. One of my New Year's resolutions is to make sure that more Americans in Wayne, more Americans in Michigan, more Americans all across this great country—that everybody feels like they're coming back. And there is no doubt, thanks to the steps that we took early on to rescue our economy and to rebuild it on a new foundation, we are entering into the new year with new confidence that America is coming back.

Now, you don't have to take my word for it. The facts are the facts. And let's face it, a lot of times the media doesn't like reporting on good news, but every once in a while, it's important for us to hear some good news, not to make us complacent, but to give us confidence that if we work harder, we can make even more good news.

So here's how we begin this year. Last year, 2014, was the strongest year for job growth since the 1990s. [*Applause*] Since the 1990s. We've now had a 57-month streak of private sector job creation. We've created nearly 11 million new jobs. That's the longest stretch in our history of private sector, uninterrupted job creation.

Here's another way of thinking about it. Since 2010, we, America, have put more peo-

ple back to work than Europe, Japan, and every other advanced economy combined. [*Applause*] Combined. And let me tell you what's leading the way: American manufacturing. After a decade of decline, American manufacturing is in its best stretch of job growth since the 1990s. Here in Michigan, manufacturers have created more than a hundred thousand jobs, helping to cut your unemployment rate in half.

So we're making more stuff. We're selling it around the world. America is the number-one producer of oil, the number-one producer of gas. It's helping to save drivers about a buck-10 a gallon at the pump over this time last year. And the cars that you make help everybody go a little further on that gallon of gas.

Thanks to the Affordable Care Act—also known as Obamacare—about 10 million Americans gained health insurance just over this last year. We've cut our deficits by about two-thirds. I'd like people to think about that, because when they do surveys of, like, ordinary folks on the street and they ask them, are the deficits going up or are they coming down, everybody automatically assumes, well, Government spending and deficits must be going up. Deficits have come down by two-thirds since I took office—by two-thirds. They're going down. And after 13 long years, our war in Afghanistan has come to a responsible end, which means more of our brave troops have come home and spent time with their families during the holidays.

So the point is, we're moving. These 6 years have been tough, demanded hard work, demanded sacrifice on everybody's part. You guys know that more than most. Which means that as a country, we have every right to be proud of what we've got to show for all that hard work.

America's resurgence is real. Don't let anybody tell you otherwise. We've got the best cards, and we are doing better than just about anybody else on Earth. And now that we've got some calmer waters, now that the worst of the crisis is behind us, if we all do our part, if we all pitch in, then we can make sure that this rising tide is actually lifting all the boats, not just some. We can make sure that the middle class is the engine that powers American prosperity for decades to come.

And that's going to be the focus of my State of the Union address in a couple of weeks: building on the progress that we've already made. But I've got to admit, I've only got 2 years left in office; I didn't want to wait for the State of the Union to talk about all the things that make this country great and how we can make it better. So I thought I'd get started this week. I figured, why wait? It's like opening your Christmas presents a little early.

So today I'm here in Detroit, going to talk about the incredible things that have happened in the auto industry and what more we can do with manufacturing. Tomorrow I'm going to visit Arizona, a State that's—was hit about as hard as anybody by the housing crisis, because we want to talk about how we're making homeownership a reality for more middle class families.

On Friday, I'm going to go to Tennessee, a State that's making big strides in education, to show how we can help every American get the education they need to get ahead in this new economy.

But today I wanted to come here to Michigan because this State proves no matter how tough times get, Americans are tougher. So—and plus, I wanted to see the new Mustang. [*Laughter*]

Now, just—let's just take a minute and think about what you've had to fight through. A few years ago, nearly one in five autoworkers got a punch in the gut with a pink slip. The year before I took office, 400,000 jobs vanished in this industry—400,000. Sales plunged 40 percent. And then, as the financial crisis built, we faced what once seemed unimaginable when just two of the Big Three—GM and Chrysler—were on the brink of failure.

Now, this is the heartbeat of American manufacturing right here. And it was flatlining. And we had a choice to make. We could have kept giving billions of taxpayer dollars to the auto industry without asking for accountability or change in return. But that would have just kicked the problem down the road. We could have done nothing, which some people said we

should do, and let those companies fail. But think about what that would have meant for this country. The suppliers, the distributors, the communities that depend on the workers who patronize the restaurants and shop at the stores—all those companies would have gone under also.

And look, the fact is, nobody was in a stronger position than Ford. Bill and the team had done a great job steering Ford through tough times, but Bill and others are the first to admit that you could have had a cascading effect if the whole supply chain in the U.S. auto industry starts declining. Then, Ford could have gone under too. Plants would have shuttered. We would have lost this iconic industry, sold for scraps. And folks like you—the men and women who built these companies with your hands—would have been left hanging out to dry. And the communities you depended on—the schoolteachers, the small-business owners, the servers in the diner, and, let's face it, the barkeep—[*laughter*]—I'm just saying. [*Laughter*] Are you a barkeep, or you're just waving at me? [*Laughter*]

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]—a teacher.

The President. But everybody would have been affected. Their jobs were at stake too.

And it's more than that. The jobs in the auto industry have always been about more than a paycheck. They're a source of pride for generations. It was representative of what it meant to get into the middle class. You work hard in this job, you could afford to raise a family, buy a house, go on vacation, retire with some dignity. You knew you were making something that people could count on. It meant something. Every car you sent off the line brought you that step closer to doing the right thing by your family and giving something to your kids and having a sense of security in your life. So plants like this one built more than just cars, they built the middle class in this country. And that was worth fighting for.

So in exchange for the help, we demanded responsibility. We said to the auto industry, you've got to change with the times. Plants retooled. Plants restructured. Labor and management worked together, settled their differences. Everybody put some skin in the game. Everybody made some sacrifices. It wasn't just some, it wasn't just the workers who gave something up—everybody.

And that's how things work best, by the way, when everybody is in it: when workers and businesses work together; when whoever is in the boardroom and folks on the floor, they both understand they're in it together. And we believe America is best when everybody is in it together. And we rejected the false choice that either unions or businesses could succeed but not both. We said: You know what, what's going to work for the company is also going to work for that worker and vice versa, which means when the company is doing better, then the workers have got to get their share as well.

And Ford rejected the false choice that they could either take care of their shareholder or take care of their worker. They did both. And the company benefited, and America benefited. We believed in shared sacrifice and that shared sacrifice leads to shared prosperity.

Now, I've got to tell you, I was talking to the Detroit News. They were asking: What was it like when you were making this decision? I just want everybody to be clear: It was not popular. Even in Michigan, it wasn't popular. I remember they did a poll and, like, in Michigan, it was like only 10 percent were in favor. [*Laughter*] And you don't have to be a genius political analyst to say 10 percent's not very high. [*Laughter*]

And look—and it wasn't on my to-do list when I ran for President. I wasn't expecting to have to do this. But I ran not to be just doing the popular things, I ran not just to do the easy things, I ran to do the right thing. And saving the American auto industry was the right thing to do. Betting on you was the right thing to do. [*Applause*] It was the right thing to do. And that bet has paid off for America, because the American auto industry is back.

Now, part of the reason that we wanted to start this trip here is not just because I wanted to see the new Mustang—[*laughter*]—not just because the American auto industry is back, but because last month, we actually marked a milestone. Last month, the rescue of the auto industry officially came to an end. The auto

companies have now repaid taxpayers every dime and more of what my administration invested in you. You paid the taxpayers back with your hard work, with your dedication.

And over the past 5 years, this industry created about 500,000 new jobs. Last year, American autoworkers churned out cars faster than any year since 2005. Ford has brought jobs back from Mexico, created nearly 24,000 new jobs across this country, including 1,800 new jobs right here in this plant. And after more than a century since Henry Ford introduced the moving assembly line, you're reinventing it: one production line for gas, electric, hybrid, plug-in vehicles. That's the first in the world, right here in Wayne, Michigan. [*Applause*] First in the world. That's always cool when you do something first.

And you're helping rebuild the middle class for the 21st century. Just down the road, in Lincoln Park, UAW-Ford Joint Apprenticeship Program is providing workers with hands-on training in the skills that employers need for the jobs of tomorrow. And nationally, by the way, 87 percent of all apprentices are employed after they complete their apprenticeship program, with an average starting wage of $50,000. So the more folks we get into apprenticeships, the more folks are getting middle class jobs.

And that's why I called on last year for businesses across the country to create more and expand more apprenticeship programs. And since then, we've seen the largest increase in apprenticeships in nearly a decade. And now my administration is investing a hundred million dollars in an American Apprenticeship Grant competition. We're going to build on this momentum. We're going to expand successful programs. We want young people to see that they have opportunities. They don't all have to go to a 4-year college. They can get an apprenticeship, save some money, start working, build a family, buy a home, get some Lions tickets. [*Laughter*]

Because everybody came together here and worked together, folks are better off. And some of the most high-tech, fuel-efficient, high-powered, heart-pounding, good-looking, well-designed, fuel-efficient cars in the world are once again designed, engineered, forged, and built not in Europe, not in Asia, right here in the United States of America. Right here in America.

So because of you—because of you—manufacturing has a future in this country. Manufacturing's actually grown faster than other parts of the economy. And companies are now saying: "You know what, we've got to get back to America; we've got to relocate. We were offshore." And now they're saying: "Uh-oh. America's back; we better get back in there." And that means, because of you, the middle class has a future in this country.

And the auto industry has proved that any comeback is possible. And by the way, so has Motor City. [*Applause*] So has a Motor City. A year and a half ago, Detroit became the largest city ever to file for bankruptcy. Today, under the leadership of Mayor Duggan, Detroit is charting a new course. Businesses and private investors are making big investments, including Ford, which is helping to launch a tech startup incubator downtown. New restaurants and stores are popping up. Residents are fighting blight, securing abandoned homes, cleaning up neglected neighborhoods.

We're seeing stories of young people who left town for other opportunities, didn't think they could make it here, and suddenly, they're saying, "You know what, maybe I want to get back to Detroit," hoping to be part of the rebirth of this city.

Now, this city still faces big challenges, but you're coming back. Just like the auto industry is going to have to continue to come up with new ideas and new designs and address competition. It never stops. We've got to stay hungry. We can't be complacent. Just like America has got to still keep on working. Just like the Lions got to still come up with a little more work. But we're coming back.

And one thing is for sure: We may not all root for the Lions, but America is rooting for Detroit. [*Applause*] America is rooting for Detroit. We want the Motor City strong. And behind the stories of plants and cities and economic data, it's people. It's all of you.

So I'll just close with a story of a guy named Ramone, because we're rooting for guys like Ramone. Ramone spent 8 years in the military, served in Afghanistan, served in Iraq. Ramone here? Raise your hand, Ramone.

So Ramone is somebody who fought for our freedom, fought for our security. But sometimes, we give lip service to supporting our troops, and then when they come home, they get lost. So when Ramone came home, he had a hard time finding a job because it was a tough economy. He didn't want to be a burden on his family, so he moved into a homeless shelter, took whatever work he could get. And then, one day in 2012, a VA counselor that he'd been working with handed him an application from Ford. Ford was hiring for new shifts.

Imagine what Ramone felt the day he knocked on his grandpa's door—his grandfather who had spent 25 years building Mustangs in Dearborn—and Ramone was able to tell his grandfather he got a job at Ford. And now Ramone has got his own place. And now Ramone has got a good job right on the line here in Wayne. And every day, he's doing just what his grandfather did. And he's proud. He's punching in and building some of the best cars in the world.

If you want to know what America is about, about grit and determination and hard work and sacrifice and looking out for one another and not giving up, think about Ramone. Think about Detroit. Think about the auto industry. Think about the Midwest. Think about Michigan. Think about America.

When our assembly lines grind to a halt, we work together, we get them going again. We don't give up. We get up, we fight back. We come back stronger than before. Thanks to the hard work of people like you, America is coming back. And I'm going to be on your side every step of the way.

Thank you, Michigan. God bless you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:22 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Mia Dew, employee, and William C. Ford, Jr., executive chairman, Ford Motor Co.; and Matthew Stafford, quarterback, and Calvin "Megatron" Johnson, wide receiver, National Football League's Detroit Lions. He also referred to Mr. Ford in his capacity as vice chairman of the Detroit Lions.

Statement on the Terrorist Attack in Paris, France
January 7, 2015

I strongly condemn the horrific shooting at the offices of Charlie Hebdo magazine in Paris that has reportedly killed 12 people. Our thoughts and prayers are with the victims of this terrorist attack and the people of France at this difficult time. France is America's oldest ally and has stood shoulder to shoulder with the United States in the fight against terrorists who threaten our shared security and the world. Time and again, the French people have stood up for the universal values that generations of our people have defended. France and the great city of Paris where this outrageous attack took place offer the world a timeless example that will endure well beyond the hateful vision of these killers. We are in touch with French officials, and I have directed my administration to provide any assistance needed to help bring these terrorists to justice.

Statement on the Observance of Orthodox Christmas
January 7, 2015

Michelle and I wish all Orthodox Christians in the United States and in the diverse Orthodox communities throughout the world a blessed and joyous Christmas. During this season of peace and fellowship, we have been saddened to see that, around the world, some

Orthodox communities face difficult times and an uncertain future. We underscore the United States commitment to promoting the freedom of religion that is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and that is the birthright of every person, everywhere. We join the Orthodox community this holiday season in celebration and in prayer for greater peace and justice throughout the world.

Remarks at the Nueva Villas at Beverly Housing Development in Phoenix, Arizona
January 8, 2015

Well, listen, I just had a chance to hear from Edmundo and David—you guys don't have to go anywhere—[*laughter*]—about this development. Nueva Villas was originally a private development, but the timing obviously was tough because it happened right as the housing market here in Arizona and across the country was plummeting. And because of the great work that this nonprofit has done, but also because of assistance from HUD, what the community has been able to do is, through a nonprofit, purchase some of these homes that were empty and vacant, hire local residents to help reconstruct them, and now they're able to make homes available to working families. A family of four that maybe makes $40,000 or $60,000 a year has a chance to buy a beautiful home in a terrific neighborhood.

The market is stabilizing. And what's even better, some of the money that they then get as a consequence of the sale to these new families, they're able to use to rehab and move in even more families. And so it's a program that's working well. It's one example of some of the steps that we've taken in order to strengthen the housing market.

The thing I'm going to be announcing today is a new policy in which the fees that are charged by the FHA for loans are going to be reduced and could save a family like this, one that's buying through FHA a home, could save them as much as $900 a year, which obviously makes a big difference if their payment is 900 bucks a month. It could be a full month's payment that they're saving, and that could make all the difference for a family that is owning its first home.

And over time, this is going to potentially have an impact over millions of families all across the country. It should help further accelerate growth in the housing market and stabilizing prices in areas like Arizona that have a long way to come back. And it's just one more example of the kinds of steps that we can take to build on the progress that's already been made. Housing has come back, but we can do even better. There are still families out there that could benefit from great homes like this one, and we want to make sure that everybody has that access to that piece of the American Dream.

So we're really thrilled by—that we're able to make this announcement. I couldn't be prouder of Secretary Castro for the work that HUD is doing in helping make a home like this available to families who need it. As you can see here, the neighborhood, it is really looking great.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:03 a.m. outside a model home. In his remarks, he referred to Edmundo Hidalgo, president and chief executive officer, and David Adame, chief economic development officer, Chicanos Por La Causa.

Remarks at Central High School in Phoenix
January 8, 2015

The President. Hello, Arizona! Well—hey! Happy New Year, Arizona. Go Bobcats!

Audience member. We love you!

The President. I love you back.

It's good to be in Phoenix. And I mean that, because I was in Detroit yesterday, which is a great city, but it was 60 degrees colder. [*Laughter*] So it feels pretty good, this weather right here. I had a couple staff people who said, "We're going to miss the plane." [*Laughter*] They're just going to try to get stranded here for a while. [*Laughter*]

But I went to Detroit, I went here; I guess between the Lions and the Cardinals, this is my post–wild card consolation tour. [*Laughter*] As a Bears fan, I want you to know that, first of all, you guys did a lot better than we did. [*Laughter*] You've got a great coach; you've got a great team. You had some bad luck. And there is always next year. So keep your chin up. Keep your chin up.

I want to thank Secretary Castro not just for the terrific introduction, but for the great job he's doing every day. I want to thank your Congressman, Ruben Gallego. Yay Ruben? Where is he? Ruben, I already liked him, and then he told me he was from Chicago originally, before he got smart and moved to warmer weather. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank your mayor, Greg Stanton. Where—he was here. There he is. Greg is doing a great job. I want to thank your principal, John Biera, Jr. [*Applause*] Hey! And your superintendent, Kent Scribner. And I want to thank all the students and staff and faculty who may be here. We really appreciate your hospitality.

I—one last acknowledgement. I had a chance to meet a couple of really good friends, Mark Kelly and Gabby Giffords. This was a remarkable meeting for me, because it was 4 years ago today that Gabby and some other wonderful Arizonans were gunned down outside a supermarket in Tucson. It's a tough day for a lot of folks down there. We keep them in our thoughts and prayers.

But Gabby is doing great. She looks wonderful, and she's got the same energy and passion that she always has had. And even as she's waged her own fight to recover, she's fought to prevent the next tragedies from happening to others. She's a hero, and she is a great Arizonan. So we're really proud of her. And her brother, who is also an astronaut—her brother-in-law, who's also an astronaut, is going to be in space for a year. He was just on the cover of Time magazine, which I know there's some folks in Washington who wish I was going to be in space for a year, but—[*laughter*]—but I'm still around. Because I got some work to do.

Now, I am here because one of my New Year's resolutions is to make sure more Americans in Phoenix and in Arizona and all across the country feel like they're coming back. Because the country is coming back, but I want everybody to feel like things are getting better and we are moving in the right direction. And let there be no doubt: Thanks to the steps we took early on to rescue our economy, to rebuild it on a new foundation, America is coming back.

And that's not just my own opinion. Here are the facts: 2014 was the strongest year for job growth since the 1990s. We've had 57 straight months of private sector job growth, created nearly 1—11 million new jobs. Since 2010, we've put more people back to work than Europe, Japan, and every advanced economy combined. American manufacturing is growing at the fastest pace since the nineties. We're now the number-one producer of oil, of gas. And by the way, you're saving about a buck-ten a gallon at the pump over this time last year.

Although, I was in Detroit, and I told folks yesterday, gas prices aren't going to be low forever, so don't start suddenly saying you don't have to worry about fuel efficiency. If you're going out shopping for a new car, don't think it's always going to be this low, because then you'll be surprised and you'll be mad at me later—[*laughter*]—and I'll be able to say, I told you don't get a gas guzzler because gas is going to go back up. But while it's low, enjoy it. And feel free to spend some of that money on local businesses, who then will hire more people and put more folks back to work.

Meanwhile, thanks to the Affordable Care Act, about 10 million Americans have gained health insurance in the past year alone.

We've done all this while cutting our Federal deficit by about two-thirds. And I'm going to repeat that, because they did a poll the other

day and, like, 70 percent of the people think the deficit is going up. [*Laughter*] No, 70 percent of the people. You stop people on the street, 7 out of 10 think the deficit is going up. The deficit has gone down by two-thirds since I was President of the United States. So we're doing all this in a fiscally responsible way.

And maybe closest to my heart, after 13 long years, our war in Afghanistan has come to a responsible end, which means more of our brave troops spent time with their families this holiday season, right here back home.

So these last 6 years required hard work and sacrifice by everybody. But as a country, we have a right to be proud that all that hard work paid off. America's resurgence is real. And now that we've got some calmer waters out there, if everybody does their part, if we all work together, we can make sure that the tide starts lifting all boats again. We can get wages and incomes growing faster. We can make sure the middle class is growing, that the ladders of the middle class for folks who are struggling are firm and steady and have a lot of rungs to them. Because it's the middle class, it's working families, that power America's prosperity. That's always been the case; that will be true for decades to come.

And I've got a State of the Union Address in about 2 weeks, and that's what I want to talk about: building on the progress we've made. But of course, why wait for the State of the Union? It's sort of like you've got presents under the tree, you kind of start shaking them a little bit. [*Laughter*] I want to kind of give you a little sense of what I want to talk about. So we're going to start this week laying out some of the agenda for the next year.

And here in Phoenix, I want to talk about helping more families afford their piece of the American Dream, and that is owning their own home.

Now, let me just say, right now Michelle and I live in rental housing. [*Laughter*] We don't own where we live. We've got 2 years remaining on our lease. [*Laughter*] I'm hoping I get my security deposit back. [*Laughter*] Although, Bo and Sunny have been tearing things up occasionally. We're going to have to clean things up a little bit. [*Laughter*]

But I'll never forget the day we bought our first place, a place of our own, a condo, back in Chicago. And for us and millions of Americans like us, buying a home has always been about more than owning a roof and four walls. It's about investing in savings and building a family and planting roots in a community. So we bought this place; it was about, I guess, probably about 2,000 square feet. It was in this complex called East View Park. It was sort of like a railway apartment. And it felt huge when we moved in. And then, Malia and Sasha were born, and their toys got everywhere. [*Laughter*] And then, it felt small because they basically took over the whole dining room with their toys.

But I have such good memories not just about the place itself, but all the work we had to do to save to get in there and then to fix it up and that sense of accomplishment that you were building something for your family and for your future.

And that's always been true. When my grandfather came back from World War II, this country gave him the chance to buy his first home with a loan from the FHA. For folks like him, a home was proof that America was a place where if you worked hard, if you were responsible, it was rewarded.

But we all know what happened in the last decade when responsibility gave way to recklessness. Families who did the right thing and bought a home that they could afford and made their payments each month and did everything right, when the market plummeted, they got hurt. Even though somebody else was acting irresponsibly—whether on Wall Street or folks who weren't responsible in terms of how they were dealing with their real estate—ordinary families got hurt bad. And that was especially true here in Arizona.

There were folks who borrowed more than they should have. There were lenders who really were just worried about making profits and not whether the people they were lending to were going to be able to keep up their homes. So home values plunged. Americans sank

underwater. Foreclosures skyrocketed. Builders stopped building. Construction workers lost their jobs.

And when I came into office, I believed we could not let this crisis play itself out. If we could save more families from losing everything they had worked so hard to build, we had to make the effort. So less than a month after I took office, I came here to Arizona to lay out my plan to get responsible homeowners back on their feet. And I said that healing our housing market wouldn't be easy, it would not be quick. But we were going to act swiftly, we were going to act boldly, we were going to try something—everything that we could to help responsible homeowners. If something didn't work, we'd try something else. But we were going to try to keep folks in their homes.

And we ended up helping millions stay in their homes. We helped millions more save thousands of dollars each year by refinancing. We helped folks who didn't want to buy a home or who weren't ready to buy find an affordable place to rent. We kept up our fight against homelessness. And by the way—there's some homeless advocates here—since 2010, we've helped bring one in three homeless veterans off the streets. And I want to make sure everybody knows, under Mayor Stanton, Phoenix is leading the way in that effort. Phoenix is doing a great job.

So, as a result of all these efforts, today, home sales are up nearly 50 percent from where they were in the worst of the crisis. Homebuilding has more than doubled. That's created hundreds of thousands of construction jobs. New foreclosures are at their lowest level since 2006. Since 2012, nearly 10 million fewer Americans have their homes underwater. Rising home prices have put hundreds of billions of dollars of wealth back in the pockets of middle class families.

Now, I want everybody to be clear: This progress is not an accident. It is not luck. It's what happens when you have policies that put middle class families first.

And what's true in Arizona is true all across the country: We've still got some more work to do, our job is not done, but what we're doing is working. And we've got to keep at it. We've got to stay at it.

Today, here in Phoenix, I'm going to take a new action to help even more responsible families stake their claim on the middle class and buy their first new home. Starting this month, the Federal Housing Authority will lower its mortgage insurance premium rates enough to save the average new borrower more than $900 a year. Now, that's $900 that can go towards paying the groceries or gas or a child's education. Or depending on what your mortgage is, it might be a month's mortgage payment.

And for those who aren't familiar with FHA, FHA underwrites, it guarantees, it's the backstop for a lot of loans around the country, especially for middle class folks. So a lot of people pay these fees, and if they're saving $900, that's money that's going to be going throughout the economy.

Over the next 3 years, these lower premiums will give hundreds of thousands more families the chance to own their own home, and it will help make owning a home more affordable for millions more households overall in the coming years.

And I—just to give you an example, earlier today Secretary Castro and I visited Nueva Villas. It's a new neighborhood here in Phoenix where a lot of families are buying homes with the help of the FHA. And we actually—this was a big development that wasn't finished or it wasn't all sold; the crisis came, half the homes were still unsold. Folks lost their homes. It started getting boarded up. People were feeling insecure. It was starting to get depressed. Nonprofits, with the help of HUD, came in, purchased some of the properties, hired local residents to rehab them. Now people are building them, beautiful homes. And with the help of the FHA, we can now make sure that more people are getting access to these homes. And today's action will mean more money in the pockets of families like the ones that we've met.

Audience member. President Obama—[*inaudible*].

The President. Is this about housing? [*Laughter*] All right.

So the—and keep in mind, hundreds of thousands of new buyers is going to mean a healthier housing market for everybody. So how many people here own their own home? [*Applause*] All right. So even though you've already got your mortgage or your loan, already have your home, if your neighbors are buying more homes, that's lifting the whole market here, which means the value of your home starts going up. And that's good for you. It means fewer foreclosure signs as people fix up old properties. It means more construction, which means more jobs, which means a better economy. So this is the kind of boost that we need to keep the momentum that we have seen over the last several years, keep it going here in Phoenix and all across the country.

So I want to be clear. If you're looking to take advantage of these lower rates, that's great. On the other hand, don't buy something you can't afford. You're going to be out of luck. These rates are for responsible buyers. We're not going down the road again of financing folks buying things they can't afford. We're going to be cracking down on that. We put in place tough rules on Wall Street, and we created a Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, and we're really policing irresponsible lenders luring folks into buying stuff they can't afford.

And we designed a mortgage form that's written in simple language so that people understand what the commitments are when you buy a home. We're cracking down on some of the worst practices that led to the housing crisis. We're going to protect middle class families from getting ripped off.

And that's why we had the Justice Department fight for buyers who were discriminated against or preyed upon, and we won a settlement that awarded more money to victims in 1 year than in the previous 23 years combined. That's why we worked with States to force big banks to repay more than $50 billion to more than 1.5 million borrowers who had been treated wrongly, and that was the largest lending settlement in history. And that's why I've called on Congress to wind down the Government-backed companies known as Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac.

So the bottom line is that we don't think there's anything wrong with pursuing a profit, but we want to make clear the days of making bad bets on the backs of taxpayer money and then getting bailed out afterwards. We're not going back to that. We've worked too hard, and everything we've done to heal the housing markets we want to preserve. But we do want to make sure that the housing market is strong and that responsible homeowners can get a good deal. Or people who have saved, done the right thing, now are looking to buy their first home, we want to make sure that they get a little bit of help.

In the end, everything we've done to heal the housing market is about more than just restoring housing values. It's about restoring our common values. It's about who we are as a country and who we are as communities.

And I want to just tell you a quick story. Lorraine Cona, from Sun City, next door, she did everything right. She had a good job as a librarian. She bought a home she could afford. She wanted to retire in that home. She made her payments on time. Then, 5 years ago, through no fault of her own, she was laid off, and she started falling behind in her payments. She knew foreclosure was coming. She said, "I'd look out the window, and I'd see somebody taking pictures of my house."

But when things seemed darkest, Lorraine learned about something called the Hardest Hit fund. This is a program that we created to help folks in States like Arizona that had been especially hard hit by the real estate crash. And they helped her make her late payments, because she had a great track record until she had lost her job. They set her up with financial counseling so she could stay on track. It wasn't easy, but Lorraine repaired her credit. She refinanced her mortgage. And today, after a lifetime of hard work, Lorraine is retired, she's back to making her payments every single month. She's in her home. She was able to accomplish that. Even though it was scary at times, she got it done. Lorraine came back, just like Phoenix has come back. Just like Arizona's come back. Just like America has come back.

It's not just the economy turning around. It's turning around the lives of hard-working people, making sure that that hard work finally pays off. It's making sure you finally get that job you're looking for or the raise you deserve or a little bit of security or the retirement that you've earned or being able to send your kid to college so their lives are better than yours. That's what this is about.

So I just want everybody to know that we have been through some tough times, but we are moving. There are workers today with jobs who didn't have jobs last year. There are families who have got health insurance who didn't have health insurance before. There are students who are in college right now who didn't think they could afford it before. There are heroes who had served tour after tour who are finally home with their families. There are autoworkers who are building great American cars now when they thought that those plants were going to shut down.

America is coming back. And the key, Arizona, is for us all to work together to make sure we keep it going.

Thank you, everybody. God bless you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:06 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Bruce Arians, head coach, National Football League's Arizona Cardinals; Kent P. Scriber, superintendent, Phoenix Union High School District; and former Rep. Gabrielle D. Giffords, her husband Mark Kelly, and brother-in-law Scott Kelly.

Statement on Senator Barbara L. Boxer's Decision Not To Seek Reelection
January 8, 2015

Barbara Boxer is more than a Senator, she's an institution. She's served the people of California for more than three decades with distinction, fighting for the issues that are close to their homes and hearts. Thanks to Barbara, more Americans breathe clean air and drink clean water. More women have access to health care. More children have safe places to go after school. More public lands have been protected for future generations. More Americans travel on safe roads and bridges. And more young women have been inspired to achieve their biggest dreams, having Barbara as an incredible role model.

It's been a pleasure to work with Barbara. She works as hard as anyone to get things done for the people of California. When she leaves the Senate at the end of this term, she will be missed greatly. But for now, I'm looking forward to working with her for the next 2 years, on behalf of Californians and all Americans.

Remarks at Pellissippi State Community College in Knoxville, Tennessee
January 9, 2015

Hello, everybody! Hey! Thank you! Everybody, please have a seat. Please have a seat. Well, it is good to be back in Tennessee. I hope you guys aren't getting tired of me. I've been coming around a lot lately, because there's a lot of good stuff happening here.

I want to begin by thanking Joe and Jill Biden. They're not just good friends and good partners, but they really believe in the power of education, and they really believe in creating those kinds of ladders to opportunity that gave all three of us and Michelle the chances, the incredible opportunities that we've had today. And they understand the promise of America's community colleges. Well, Jill really understands it, and Joe—[*laughter*]—he doesn't really have a choice. But—[*laughter*].

Before I get into the reason that I'm here today, I want to begin by saying just a few words about the tragic events that we've watched unfold in France over the last several hours and days. And because events have been fast mov-

ing this morning, I wanted to make sure to comment on them.

I just spoke to my counterterrorism adviser. We have been in close touch with the French Government throughout this tragedy. The moment that the outrageous attack took place, we directed all of our law enforcement and counterintelligence operations to provide whatever support that our ally needs in confronting this challenge. We're hopeful that the immediate threat is now resolved, thanks to the courage and professionalism of the French personnel on the ground.

But the French Government continues to face the threat of terrorism and has to remain vigilant. The situation is fluid. President Hollande has made it clear that they're going to do whatever is necessary to protect their people. And I think it's important for us to understand: France is our oldest ally. I want the people of France to know that the United States stands with you today, stands with you tomorrow. Our thoughts and prayers are with the families who have been directly impacted. We grieve with you. We fight alongside you to uphold our values, the values that we share, universal values that bind us together as friends and as allies.

And in the streets of Paris, the world has seen once again what terrorists stand for. They have nothing to offer but hatred and human suffering. And we stand for freedom and hope and the dignity of all human beings. And that's what the city of Paris represents to the world, and that spirit will endure forever, long after the scourge of terrorism is banished from this world. So—[*applause*]—that's important. Anyway.

Now, I'm in Knoxville not only because I just like Knoxville, but I'm here today because one of my resolutions is to make sure that folks across this great country feel like they are coming back. And there is no doubt: Thanks to the steps we took early on to rescue our economy and to rebuild it on a new foundation, America is coming back.

Now, I'm not running for office anymore, so let me just present the facts. I promised that 2014 would be a breakthrough year for America. This morning we got more evidence to back that up. In December, our businesses created 240,000 new jobs. Our unemployment rate fell to 5.6 percent, which is the lowest in 6½ years. What that means is, 2014 was the strongest year for job growth since the 1990s. Unemployment fell in 2014 faster than any year since 1984. Now, think about that. It's been 30 years since unemployment fell as fast as it did last year. And most importantly, we're seeing faster job growth in industries that provide good-paying jobs, traditionally middle class jobs, than anything else.

Since 2010, the United States of America has created more jobs than Europe, Japan, and every other advanced economy combined. American manufacturing is in its best stretch of job growth since the 1990s. We're actually seeing companies insourcing instead of outsourcing. They're realizing, we want to be here with American workers making American products. America is now the world's number-one producer in oil, gas. We've doubled the production of clean energy. And by the way, you're saving about a buck-10 a gallon at the pump over this time last year.

Although, I keep on reminding folks, gas prices, they go up and they come down and then they go up. [*Laughter*] So I just want everybody to know that you should enjoy this. Take the money you're saving, pay off the credit card or go get a new appliance or buy a fuel-efficient car—[*laughter*]—so that when prices go back up, you're still well positioned.

Thanks to the Affordable Care Act, about 10 million Americans have gained health insurance over the past year. And by the way, we've done this while cutting our deficits by about two-thirds. Everybody thinks that—[*applause*]. They did a survey; in every survey, they ask, is the deficit going up or going down? And 70 percent of Americans say that the deficit is going up. The deficit has come down by two-thirds since I took office. So—[*applause*].

Meanwhile, thanks to the hard work of students and educators, dropout rates are down, graduation rates are up. And after 13 long years, our war in Afghanistan has come to a responsible end, and we've got more troops that were home this holiday season.

So I say all this because these 6 years have demanded a lot of hard work and a lot of sacrifice on everybody's part. And as a country, we've got every right to be proud of what we've got to show for it. America's resurgence is real. And now that we've seen calmer waters economically, if we all do our part, if we all pitch in, then we can start making sure that all boats are actually lifted again and wages and incomes start rising again. And we can make sure that the middle class is the engine that powers America's prosperity just as it always has.

So that's going to be the focus of my State of the Union Address in a couple weeks. I wanted to give you a little preview. Don't tell anybody I said this—[*laughter*]—but I'm giving you the inside scoop. That's the—that's going to be the essence of my message: How do we build on the progress that we've made? And I figured, why wait for the State of the Union? [*Laughter*] Why stand on formalities? Let's get the ball rolling right now.

Two days ago, I visited Michigan, where workers have brought the auto industry roaring back. And we talked about what else we can do around advanced manufacturing. Yesterday I was in Arizona, where I announced new actions to make the dream of homeownership a reality for more middle class families. Later today Joe and I are going to head to a company in Clinton to take action that will develop high-tech industry even further here in Tennessee. And right here, right now, at Pellissippi State, I'm going to announce one of my most important State of the Union proposals, and that's helping every American afford a higher education.

Now, part of the reason I wanted to come here was because Tennessee is at the forefront of doing some really smart stuff. And we've got some proud Tennesseans who can take some credit for the great work that's been done. First, your Governor, Bill Haslam, who's here. Your two very fine Senators: You've got Bob Corker and your senior Senator, Lamar Alexander, who's a former Secretary of Education himself, so he knows a little bit about this. You've got Congressman John Duncan. Your mayor, Madeline Rogero. And we've got Pellissippi's president, Anthony Wise. [*Applause*] Hey! And we've got all of you. [*Laughter*]

Now, Joe already—and Jill both already touched on these themes, but let me just amplify them a little bit. Here in America, we don't guarantee equal outcomes. Some folks work harder; some folks don't. Some folks take advantage of opportunities; some folks don't. Some people have good luck; some people have bad luck, and things don't always work out where everything is perfectly equal. But we do expect that everybody gets an equal shot. We do expect everybody can go as far as their dreams and hard work will take them.

We don't expect anybody to be bound by the circumstances of their birth. If they were, I wouldn't be here, and neither would Joe. Jill, she's so accomplished she would have succeeded no matter what. [*Laughter*] But we expect everybody to get a fair shot. And in exchange, we do our fair share. That's the basic bargain at the heart of this country: If you work hard, you can get ahead. It shouldn't matter what your last name is or what we look like or what family we were born into or how we worship. What matters is effort and merit. That's the promise of America.

And the way we deliver on that is making sure that our education system works on behalf of every person who lives here. America thrived in the 20th century in large part because we made high school the norm, and then, we sent a generation to college on the GI bill, including my grandfather. Then, we dedicated ourselves to cultivating the most educated workforce in the world, and we invested in what's one of the crown jewels of this country, and that's our higher education system. And then, dating back to Abraham Lincoln, we invested in land-grant colleges. We understood that this was a hallmark of America, this investment in education.

But eventually, the world caught on and the world caught up. And that's why we have to lead the world in education again. That's why my administration is working to make high-quality early childhood education available to all of our kids. We know if we invest in them early, it pays dividends on the backend.

That's why we're working to bring high-speed broadband to 99 percent of America's students within the next 4 years. We want to make sure every child is plugged in. That's why we're recruiting more highly trained math and science teachers. That's why we're working to raise standards and invest more in our elementary and middle and high schools so that every young person is prepared for a competitive world.

And this work is not easy. Sometimes, it's controversial. It's not going to be the same in every State. But in places like Tennessee, we're seeing incredible strides as a consequence of these efforts. Over the past few years, Tennessee's students have improved their reading scores and math scores more than any other State in the country. That's a credit to their hard work, their teachers' hard work, Governor Haslam's hard work, leaders from both parties. It's about—it's been a bipartisan effort. Every Tennessean should be proud of that.

And today, in a 21st-century economy, where your most valuable asset is your knowledge, the single most important way to get ahead is not just to get a high school education, you've got to get some higher education. And that's why all of you are here.

Now, the value of an education is not purely instrumental. Education helps us be better people. It helps us be better citizens. You came to college to learn about the world and to engage with new ideas and to discover the things you're passionate about—and maybe have a little fun. [*Laughter*] And to expand your horizons. That's terrific. That's a huge part of what college has to offer.

But you're also here, now more than ever, because a college degree is the surest ticket to the middle class. It is the key to getting a good job that pays a good income and to provide you the security where even if you don't have the same job for 30 years, you're so adaptable and you have a skill set and the capacity to learn new skills, it ensures you're always employable.

And that is the key not just for individual Americans, that's the key for this whole country's ability to compete in the global economy. In the new economy, jobs and businesses will go wherever the most skilled, best educated workforce resides. Because businesses are mobile now. Technology means they can locate anywhere. And where they have the most educated, most adaptable, most nimble workforce, that's where they're going to locate. And I want them to look no further than the United States of America. I want them coming right here. I want those businesses here, and I want the American people to be able to get those businesses—or get those jobs that those businesses create.

So that's why we've increased grants and took on a student loan system that was funneling billions of taxpayer dollars through big banks and said, let's cut out the middleman, let's give them directly to students instead. We can help more students.

We've increased scholarships. We've cut taxes for people paying tuition. We've let students cap their Federal student loan payments at 10 percent of income so that they can borrow with confidence, particularly if you're going into a job like nursing or teaching that may not pay a huge salary, but that's where your passions are.

We're creating a new college ratings system that will give parents and students the kind of clear, concise information you need to shop around for a school with the best value for you and gives us the capacity to recognize schools that offer a great education at a reasonable price.

On the flight over here, Lamar and I were talking about how we can do more to simplify the application process for Federal student loans, which is still too complicated.

So we've done a lot of good work over the last 6 years; we're going to keep at it. But today I want to focus on a centerpiece of my education agenda, and that's the community colleges, like this one.

For millions of Americans, community colleges are essential pathways to the middle class because they're local, they're flexible. They work for people who work full time. They work for parents who have to raise kids full time. They work for folks who have gone as far as their skills will take them and want to earn new

ones, but don't have the capacity to just suddenly go study for four years and not work. Community colleges work for veterans transitioning back into civilian life. Whether you're the first in your family to go to college or coming back to school after many years away, community colleges find a place for you. And you can get a great education.

Now, Jill has been teaching English at community colleges for 20 years. She started when she was, like, 15. [*Laughter*] And she's still full time today. And she sees—I talk to her, and she talks about her students, and she can see the excitement and the promise and sometimes the fear of being a 32-year-old mom who's going back to school and never finished the degree that she had started, and life got in the way, and now she's coming back and suddenly getting a whole new skill set and seeing a whole range of career options opening up to her. It's exciting.

And that's what community colleges are all about: the idea that no one with drive and discipline should be left out, should be locked out of opportunity, and certainly, that nobody with that drive and discipline should be denied a college education just because they don't have the money. Every American, whether they're young or just young at heart, should be able to earn the skills and education necessary to compete and win in the 21st-century economy.

So today I'm announcing an ambitious new plan to bring down the cost of community college tuition in America. I want to bring it down to zero. We're going to—[*applause*]. I want to make it free. I want to make it free. Community colleges should be free for those willing to work for it, because in America, a quality education cannot be a privilege that is reserved for a few. I think it's a right for everybody who's willing to work for it.

Now, the good news is, you already do something like this in Tennessee. You call it Tennessee Promise. So you call it Tennessee Promise, and we thought, why not just build on what works? So we're going to call it America's College Promise.

And the concept is simple: America's College Promise will make 2 years of community college free to responsible students who are willing to work for it. Now, I want to underscore that last clause: everybody who's working hard for it. There are no free rides in America. You would have to earn it. Students would have to do their part by keeping their grades up. Colleges would have to do their part by offering high-quality academics and helping students actually graduate. States would have to do their part too. This isn't a blank check. It's not a free lunch. But for those willing to do the work, and for States and local communities that want to be a part of this, it can be a game changer.

Think about it: Students who started at community colleges during those 2 years and then go on to a 4-year institution, they essentially get the first half of their bachelor's degree for free. People who enroll for skills training will graduate ready—already ready to work, and they won't have a pile of student debt. Two years of college will become as free and universal as high school is today.

Now, we're also taking another page out of Tennessee's playbook and making investments to expand technical training programs at community colleges, much like you do through your 27 colleges of applied technology. Joe did a terrific job running a Task Force that we put together just to look at the job training and technical training systems all around the country. And at a time when jobs are changing and higher wages call for higher skills, we've got to make sure workers have a chance to get those skills.

We want young people to graduate with real-world training that leads directly to good jobs, and we want older workers to get retrained so they can compete. And we want more women and minorities to get jobs in fields that traditionally they've been left out of, like science and technology and engineering and math. And we want to connect community colleges with employers, because when that's done right, these partnerships pay off for everybody: Students learn on the job, employers get access to talent, colleges get help designing courses that actually prepare people for the workplace, all of which creates better pathways

to today's middle class. So we're going to find the programs that work, and we're going to help them grow.

Now, in a few weeks, I'm going to send to Congress my plan for free community college. I hope that Congress will come together to support it, because opening the doors of higher education shouldn't be a Democratic issue or a Republican issue, this is an American issue.

Governor Haslam is a Republican. And thanks to his leadership, last year Democrats and Republicans came together and made Tennessee the first State in decades to offer free community college to its students. Meanwhile, up in my hometown of Chicago, Mayor Rahm Emanuel, who is a Democrat, is now offering free community college, and they're pairing students with growing sectors of the economy so they graduate with good jobs. So if a State with Republican leadership is doing this and a city with Democratic leadership is doing this, then how about we all do it? Let's do it for our future.

And as I said before, there are a bunch of good bipartisan ideas out there. A few days ago, Senator Alexander joined forces with a Democratic Senator, Michael Bennet, to introduce the legislation that would make financial aid forms simpler. I noticed a lot of people applauded, because it's been a while since I filled it out—[*laughter*]—but I understand there's more than a hundred questions on it. It just shouldn't be that hard to apply for aid for college. And so I've committed to working with Senator Alexander. Let's shrink it down. Let's make life a little easier for millions of families. The point is, we're not going to agree on everything. But simplifying that form, that's something we should be able to agree on. Let's get that done this year.

Because in the end, nothing is more important to our country than you, our people. That's our asset. I mean, we've got very nice real estate here. We've got this incredible bounty, this—the God-given resources that we enjoy in this country. But our greatest resource is our people.

And I want to say to the students here and the staff and faculty how proud I am of what you guys are doing. A lot of students here, I know you had to overcome some obstacles to get here. Many of you are the first in your families to go to college. Some of you are working full time while you're going to school. But you're making this investment in you, and by doing that, you're making an investment in this country's future.

And I just want to use one person's story as an example, Caitlin McLawhorn. Where's Caitlin? Where is she? Is she here? I thought she was here a second ago. She—but I'm going to tell her story anyway. [*Laughter*]

She was raised by a single mom. She helped make ends meet, getting her first job almost the minute she could, 2 days after her 16th birthday. When it came time for college, the money wasn't there. But Caitlin lives in Tennessee, so she knew she had a great, free option. She completed 2 years at this institution. Now she's a senior at Maryville College. She's working full time, just like she has since her first day of college. And Caitlin says: "A lot of people like me got discouraged. I get discouraged. But I can look back and say, you've made it so far. I've learned that things aren't always what you want, but you can make them what you want." That's a—that's wisdom.

"Things aren't always what you want, but you can make them what you want." That's what America is about. We can make of our lives what we will. And there are going to be bumps, and there are going to be challenges. And we've come through some very hard times. Things aren't always what we wanted, but we have overcome discouragement, and we have overcome division and sometimes some discord. And we don't give up. We get up, we fight back, we come back stronger than before.

Thanks to the hard work of the American people, the United States of America is coming back. And I've never been as confident as we—in my entire life that we're going to make of our future what we want of it thanks to you.

Appreciate it, Tennessee. God bless you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:05 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Lisa O. Monaco.

Remarks at the Techmer PM, LLC, Manufacturing Facility in Clinton, Tennessee

January 9, 2015

The President. Good afternoon, everybody. There's no need to stand up. Thank you so much. First of all, it's wonderful being here in Clinton. And I want to thank Mayor Scott Burton and very much appreciate the hospitality. And I want to thank John Manuck and the whole Techmer team for having me and the Vice President, as well as your own Senator, Bob Corker.

I understand I am the first President—sitting President—to visit Clinton. You'd think Bill would have come down here. [*Laughter*] I don't know——

Vice President Joe Biden. Missed opportunity.

The President. Missed opportunity. Let me tell you, if there's an Obama, Tennessee—[*laughter*]—I'm going there. [*Laughter*] But the reason we're here is because wherever Americans are doing big things that can help build our middle class and grow our economy and extend opportunity to everybody, I want to be here to lift it up and figure out how we can promote more of it.

Last year, our economy created jobs faster than at any time since the 1990s. The key now is to make sure that that growing prosperity and resurgence is reaching everybody, not just some. And that means that that we've got to create more good jobs and we've got to train people for those jobs that are being created. The—and this is going to be the focus of my State of the Union Address, but we decided to get started a little early.

This morning I was over in Pellissippi State, where I announced my plan to make 2 years of community college free for students who are willing to work hard, keep their grades up, and do the right thing. And we're here in Clinton because I'm taking actions, building on what we've been doing over the last 4 or 5 years, to attract more high-quality manufacturing jobs for workers to fill in the new economy.

For decades, manufacturing was the essential ingredient in building our middle class. You punched in, you made something you were proud of—made in America, shipped everywhere around the world—and as a consequence, you were able to take home a good paycheck, could support your family, had good benefits. And it was a bargain that involved more than just building things, it reflected the values that this country stood for.

Over time, technology made some jobs obsolete. Globalization and additional foreign competition meant that some jobs went overseas. American manufacturing lost about one-third of its jobs in the last decade, and the middle class paid the price.

So when I took office, I believed—and I know Joe believed—that if the last decade was characterized by outsourcing, I wanted to define this decade for insourcing, making sure that the United States was competitive and that businesses wanted to locate here and that we had a dynamic manufacturing sector and research and development sector to support that manufacturing so that we could reverse some of those trends.

So we invested in clean energy, saved the auto industry, and today, factories are opening their doors at the fastest pace in almost two decades. Manufacturing is actually in its best stretch of job creation since the 1990s. It's added about 786,000 jobs over the past 58 months. Manufacturing is actually growing faster than the rest of the economy. Right here in Tennessee, manufacturing jobs have jumped by about 11 percent.

And the question is, how do we keep that progress going? How do we build on it? And that's why we're working to grow the jobs of to-

morrow through a national network of manufacturing hubs. We're launching these hubs around the country, and the concept is simple: We bring businesses, research universities, community colleges, State, local, and Federal governments together, and we figure out, where are some key opportunities for manufacturing in the future, how do we get out in front of the curve, how do we make sure everybody is working together?

And as a consequence, we're potentially able to get cutting-edge research and design to market faster, and businesses are intimately involved in the process of figuring out how these things can be applied in ways that are really going to boost the economy and, in some cases, create entirely new industries.

So these hubs are working on everything from 3–D printing—the idea that you can have some software and put in some materials and something pops out that actually works—to flexible computer chips that can be woven into the fabric of your shirt.

And today we're proud to announce our latest manufacturing hub, and it is right here in Tennessee. Led by the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, the hub will be home to 122 public and private partners who are teaming up to develop materials that are lighter and stronger than steel. So these are materials that would be ideal for fuel-efficient cars or longer wind turbine blades that produce more energy or materials that might go into our aviation sector. And of course, these advanced polymer composites are a sophisticated combination of materials like carbon fiber and tough plastics. That's—we saw some samples during our tour here. Everybody knows that. That means they're expensive to produce. So the idea here is for the partners to come together to see if we can not only come up with improved design, but also start driving down cost and look at new applications.

So Joe and I just watched how these folks develop the composites here at Techmer. That was cool. We lost Joe's attention when we laid eyes on that 3–D-printed sports car—[*laughter*]—the carbon filler Cobra. Biden started pulling out his aviator glasses—[*laughter*]—and we had to explain to him, you don't get to drive on this trip. [*Laughter*]

But besides being a cool car, it's a great example of how the hub like this operates. So Oak Ridge National Labs creates—created the design and manufacturing processes. Techmer produced the composite materials. Another company called Tru-Design developed the surface finishing techniques. Undergrads from UT worked on the project, gaining skills that can help them get hired in the future. And a number of others partners chipped in as well.

So these hubs just make sense. They work. They get people working together. They create an ecosystem for a particular type of manufacturing and a specialization that allows, then, where the hub is located, to be a magnet for others who want to participate in this particular industry. And this is why—this is an area where Congress and I are working together. Bob Corker, myself, Governor Haslam, we're all interested in making sure that advanced manufacturing is taking place here in the United States.

Last month, I was glad to see Members of Congress from both parties pass legislation that supports the progress we've made by creating a real national network of hubs. Senators Brown and Blunt and Representatives Kennedy and Reed deserve credit for working together to get this legislation over the finish line. I'm working to work with Congress this year to fully fund the network.

Because places like this are who we are. We create. We innovate. We build. We do it together. When I was taking the tour and we had a chance to hear from John about how he got this company started: started off as an engineer, worked for another big company, and then decided he could it better and struck out on his own. And that story of entrepreneurship and taking a chance, that's what built this country.

But at every step of the way throughout our history, there have been instances where government can be a partner in that progress: whether it's creating infrastructure, whether it's financing the basic research that generates new products. That's a role we can play.

We've got the most dynamic economy in the world, and we've got the best businesspeople in the world and the best universities in the world. Let's put them all together and make sure they're working to create more good jobs and more opportunity for the American people.

So congratulations to the new hub. Let's get to work. And I look forward to hearing about all the great things that are coming out of Clinton and across Tennessee and across America. Appreciate you. All right.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to John R. Manuck, chairman and chief executive officer, Techmer PM, LLC; and former President William J. Clinton. He also referred to H.R. 2996.

Statement on the Presidential Election in Sri Lanka
January 9, 2015

On behalf of the American people, I congratulate the people of Sri Lanka on the successful and peaceful conclusion of Sri Lanka's Presidential election and incoming President Maithripala Sirisena on his victory. I also commend the outgoing administration of former President Mahinda Rajapaksa for facilitating a swift and orderly transition of power. Beyond the significance of this election to Sri Lanka, it is also a symbol of hope for those who support democracy all around the world. International and domestic monitors and observers were permitted to do their jobs. Sri Lankans from all segments of society cast their ballots peacefully, and the voice of the people was respected. At this moment of hope, the United States looks forward to deepening its partnership with the people and Government of Sri Lanka and to working with President Sirisena to advance peace, democracy, and prosperity for all Sri Lankans.

Statement on the Death of Andraé E. Crouch
January 9, 2015

Michelle and I were saddened to learn of the passing of music legend Pastor Andraé Crouch. Pastor Crouch grew up the son of a minister in California and discovered at a young age that he was blessed with extraordinary musical talent, which would lead to an iconic career that spanned over 50 years. As a leading pioneer of contemporary gospel music, the soulful classics that Pastor Crouch created over the years have uplifted the hearts and minds of several generations, and his timeless influence continues to be felt in not only gospel, but a variety of music genres. We are grateful that his music and spirit will continue to live on for years to come, and our thoughts and prayers are with his family, friends, and fans during this time.

Memorandum on the Twelfth Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation
January 9, 2015

Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense

Subject: Twelfth Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation

Under section 1008(b) of title 37, United States Code, every 4 years the President is required to complete a review of the compensation system for the uniformed service members of the Department of Defense, the Coast Guard, and the commissioned corps of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and Public Health Service. You typically serve as my Executive Agent for this review, consulting me as required.

The Fiscal Year 2013 National Defense Authorization Act (Public Law 112–239) established the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission (Commission) and chartered it to conduct a review of the military compensation and retirement systems and make recommendations to modernize these systems. This Commission has been tasked to submit a report, containing a comprehensive study and recommendations, to me by February 1, 2015. The report will contain detailed findings and conclusions of the Commission, together with its recommendations for such legislation and administrative actions it may consider appropriate.

I have determined the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission also satisfies the requirements of section 1008(b) of title 37 and that a separate Twelfth Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation is not required.

BARACK OBAMA

The President's Weekly Address
January 10, 2015

Hi, everybody. About a year ago, I promised that 2014 would be a breakthrough year for America. And this week, we got more evidence to back that up.

In December, our businesses created 240,000 new jobs. The unemployment rate fell to 5.6 percent. That means that 2014 was the strongest year for job growth since the 1990s. In 2014, unemployment fell faster than it has in three decades.

Over a 58-month streak, our businesses have created 11.2 million new jobs. After a decade of decline, American manufacturing is in its best stretch of job growth since the nineties. America is now the world's number-one producer of oil and gas, helping to save drivers about a buck-10 a gallon at the pump over this time last year. Thanks to the Affordable Care Act, about 10 million Americans have gained health insurance in the past year alone. We've cut our deficits by about two-thirds. And after 13 long years, our war in Afghanistan has come to a responsible end, and more of our brave troops have come home.

It's been 6 years since the crisis. Those years have demanded hard work and sacrifice on everybody's part. So as a country, we have every right to be proud of what we've got to show for it. America's resurgence is real. And now that we've got some calmer waters, if we all do our part, if we all pitch in, we can make sure that tide starts lifting all boats again. We can make sure that the middle class is the engine that powers America's prosperity for decades to come.

That'll be the focus of my State of the Union Address in a couple weeks: building on the progress we've made. But I figured, why wait? Let's get started right now.

On Wednesday, I visited a Ford plant outside of Detroit, because the American auto industry and its home State are redefining the word "comeback." On Thursday, I traveled to Arizona, a State that was hit among the hardest by the housing crisis, to announce a new plan that will put hundreds of dollars in new homeowners' pockets and help more new families buy their first home. And I'm speaking with you today from Pellissippi State Community College in Tennessee, a State making big strides in education, to unveil my new plan to make 2 years of community college free for every responsible student. I'm also here to establish a new hub that will attract more good-paying, high-tech manufacturing jobs to our shores.

Making homeownership easier, bringing a higher education within reach, creating more good jobs that pay good wages—these are just some of the ways we can help every American get ahead in the new economy. And there's more to come. Because America is coming back. And I want to go full speed ahead.

Thanks, everybody, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 12:30 p.m. on January 9 in Room 150 of the Alexander Building at Pellissippi State Community College in Knoxville, TN, for broadcast on January 10. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 9, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on January 10.

Remarks at the Federal Trade Commission Constitution Center
January 12, 2015

Thank you so much. Thank you. Everybody, have a seat. Thank you. Well, thank you, Edith, for your introduction. As was mentioned, Edith and I go a long way back. In law school we served on the Law Review together. I will not say who edited who. [*Laughter*] I will say she looks exactly the same. [*Laughter*] And I do not. [*Laughter*] And it's upsetting. [*Laughter*]

But, Edith, in your career, you've stood up for citizens and communities. I was proud to nominate you, first as a Commissioner, and then as Chairwoman of the FTC. You are doing an outstanding job, as are your fellow Commissioners, and we very much appreciate your outstanding efforts.

In Edith's story, from the daughter of Mexican immigrants to the head of the FTC, we see a central part of the American story. And that's worth remembering at a time when those are issues that we're debating all the time. It's a reminder that what makes this country special is the incredible talent that we draw from all around the world and somehow it all merges into something unique: America.

To Edith, to the fellow Commissioners, to all of you who work at the FTC, thanks for welcoming me. I'm told I may be the first President to come to the FTC in nearly 80 years, since FDR in 19—[*applause*]—first time apparently since FDR in 1937, which is a little surprising. I mean, you'd think, like, one of the Presidents would just come here by accident. [*Laughter*] You know, they ended up in the wrong building. [*Laughter*] "Where are we?" "We're at the FTC." [*Laughter*]

Anyway, I figured it was time to correct that. Plus, I know sometimes your name confuses folks. They don't always understand what your mission is. One person who does understand is David Letterman. [*Laughter*] A few months ago he thanked you for standing up to the companies that were trying to pitch a new weight-loss product, "caffeine-laced undergarments." [*Laughter*] I'm actually not making this up. [*Laughter*] You ruled that these products were "not substantiated by scientific evidence." [*Laughter*] So thank you for saving America from caffeine-laced undergarments. [*Laughter*] These companies owed consumers a refund. [*Laughter*]

And that was just the latest example, because, as Edith said, you recently celebrated your 100th anniversary. And I want to thank you for a hundred proud years of protecting American consumers. I also want to thank some of the Members of Congress who are here today and many of our partners from not just government, but the private sector and consumer and privacy and advocacy groups.

Next week, just up the street, I will deliver the State of the Union Address. And it will be a chance to talk about America's resurgence, including something we can all be proud of, which is the longest stretch of private sector job growth in American history: 58 straight months and more than 11 million new jobs. In the speech, I'm going to focus on how we can build on that progress and help more Americans feel that resurgence in their own lives, through higher wages and rising incomes and a growing middle class.

But since I've only got 2 years left in this job, I tend to be impatient, and I didn't want to wait for the State of the Union to start sharing my plans. So I've been traveling across the country rolling out some of the ideas that we'll be talking about, a little bit of a sneak preview.

And in the 21st century—in this dizzying age of technology and innovation—so much of the prosperity that we seek, so many of the jobs that we create, so much of the opportunity that's available for the next generation depends on our digital economy. It depends on our abil-

ity to search and connect and shop and do business and create and discover and learn online, in cyberspace. And as we've all been reminded over the past year, including the hack of Sony, this extraordinary interconnection creates enormous opportunities, but also creates enormous vulnerabilities for us as a nation and for our economy and for individual families.

So this week, I'm laying out some new proposals on how we can keep seizing the possibilities of an Information Age, while protecting the security and prosperity and values that we all cherish. Today I'm focusing on how we can better protect American consumers from identity theft and ensure our privacy, including for our children at school. And then tomorrow, at the Department of Homeland Security, I'll focus on how we can work with the private sector to better defend ourselves against cyber attacks. And finally, on Wednesday, in Iowa, I'll talk about how we can give families and communities faster, cheaper access to broadband so they can succeed in the digital economy.

But I wanted to start here, at the FTC, because every day you take the lead in making sure that Americans, their hard-earned money and their privacy are protected, especially when they go online. And these days, that's pretty much for everything: managing our bank accounts, paying our bills, handling everything from medical records to movie tickets, controlling our homes—smart houses—from smartphones. Secret Service does not let me do that. [*Laughter*] But I know other people do.

And with these benefits come risks: Major companies get hacked; America's personal information, including financial information, gets stolen. And the problem is growing, and it costs us billions of dollars. In one survey, 9 out of 10 Americans say they feel like they've lost control of their personal information. In recent breaches, more than a hundred million Americans have had their personal data compromised, like credit card information. When these cyber criminals start racking up charges on your card, it can destroy your credit rating. It can turn your life upside down. It may take you months to get your finances back in order. So this is a direct threat to the economic security of American families, and we've got to stop it.

If we're going to be connected, then we need to be protected. As Americans, we shouldn't have to base—have to forfeit our basic privacy when we go online to do our business. And that's why, since I took office, we've been working with the private sector to strengthen our cyber defenses. A few months ago, we launched our BuySecure initiative. The Federal Government and companies across the country are moving to stronger chip-and-PIN technology for credit cards. Here at the FTC, you're working with credit bureaus so that victims can recover their stolen identities faster, and every day, you're helping consumers with identitytheft.gov.

So today I'm announcing new steps to protect the identities and privacy of the American people. Let me list them for you. First, we're introducing new legislation to create a single, strong national standard so Americans know when their information has been stolen or misused. Right now almost every State has a different law on this, and it's confusing for consumers, and it's confusing for companies. And it's costly, too, to have to comply to this patchwork of laws. Sometimes, folks don't even find out their credit card information has been stolen until they see charges on their bill, and then it's too late. So under the new standard that we're proposing, companies would have to notify consumers of a breach within 30 days. In addition, we're proposing to close loopholes in the law so we can go after more criminals who steal and sell the identities of Americans, even when they do it overseas.

Second, I'm pleased that more banks, credit card issuers, and lenders are stepping up and equipping Americans with another weapon against identity theft, and that's access to their credit scores, free of charge. This includes JPMorgan Chase, Bank of America, USAA, State Employees' Credit Union, Ally Financial. Some of them are here today. I want to thank them for their participation. This means that a majority of American adults will have free access to their credit score, which is like an early warning system telling you that you've been hit

by fraud so you can deal with it fast. And we're encouraging more companies to join this effort every day.

Third, we're going to be introducing new legislation: a Consumer Privacy Bill of Rights. Working with many of you, from the private sector and advocacy groups, we've identified some basic principles to both protect personal privacy and ensure that industry can keep innovating. For example, we believe that consumers have the right to decide what personal data companies collect from them and how companies use that data, that information; the right to know that your personal information collected for one purpose can't then be misused by a company for a different purpose; the right to have your information stored securely by companies that are accountable for its use. We believe that there ought to be some basic baseline protections across industries. So we're going to be introducing this legislation by the end of next month, and I hope Congress joins us to make the Consumer Privacy Bill of Rights the law of the land.

And finally, we're taking a series of actions to protect the personal information and privacy of our children. Those of us with kids know how hard this can be. Whether they are texting or tweeting or on Facebook or Instagram or Vine, our children are meeting up—and they are growing up—in cyberspace. It is all-pervasive. And here at the FTC, you've pushed back on companies and apps that collect information on our kids without permission.

And Michelle and I are like parents everywhere: We want to make sure that our children are being smart and safe online. That's a responsibility of ours as parents. But we need partners. And we need a structure that ensures that information is not being gathered without us as parents or the kids knowing it. We want our kids' privacy protected, whether—wherever they sign on or log on, including at school.

Now, we've—the good news is, we've got new educational technologies that are transforming how our children learn. You've got innovative websites and apps and tablets, digital textbooks and tutors. Students are getting lessons tailored to their unique learning needs. We want to encourage that information. And it also facilitates teachers and parents tracking student progress and grades in real time. And all this is part of what our ConnectED initiative is about: connecting 99 percent of American students to high-speed Internet so that we're empowering students, teachers, and parents and giving them access to worlds they may never have had access to before.

But we've already seen some instances where some companies use educational technologies to collect student data for commercial purposes, like targeted advertising. And parents have a legitimate concern about those kinds of practices.

So today we're proposing the Student Digital Privacy Act. And it's pretty straightforward. We're saying that data collected on students in the classroom should only be used for educational purposes: to teach our children, not to market to our children. We want to prevent companies from selling student data to third parties for purposes other than education. We want to prevent any kind of profiling that outs certain students at a disadvantage as they go through school.

And we believe that this won't just give parents more peace of mind, we're confident that it will make sure the tools we use in the classroom will actually support the breakthrough research and innovations that we need to keep unlocking new educational technologies.

Now, we didn't have to completely reinvent the wheel on this proposal. Many States have proposed similar legislation. California just passed a landmark law. And I hope Congress joins us in this national movement to protect the privacy of our children.

We won't wait for legislation though. The Department of Education is going to offer new tools to help schools and teachers work with tech companies to protect the privacy of students. As of today, 75 companies across the country have signed on to a Student Privacy Pledge. And among other things, they're committing not to sell student information or use educational technologies to engage in targeted advertising to students.

Some of those companies are here today. We want to thank you for your leadership. I want to encourage every company that provides these technologies to our schools to join this effort. It's the right thing to do. And if you don't join this effort, then we intend to make sure that those schools and those parents know you haven't joined this effort.

So this mission, protecting our information and privacy in the Information Age, this should not be a partisan issue. This should be something that unites all of us as Americans. It's one of those new challenges in our modern society that crosses the old divides, transcends politics, transcends ideology. Liberal, conservative, Democrat, Republican—everybody is online, and everybody understands the risks and vulnerabilities as well as opportunities that are presented by this new world.

Business leaders want their privacy and their children's privacy protected, just like everybody else does. Consumer and privacy advocates also want to make sure that America keeps leading the world in technology and innovation and apps. So there are some basic, commonsense, pragmatic steps that we ought to all be able to support.

And rather than being at odds, I think that much of this work actually reinforces each other. The more we do to protect consumer information and privacy, the harder it is for hackers to damage our businesses and hurt our economy. Meanwhile, the more companies strengthen their cybersecurity, the harder it is for hackers to steal consumer information and hurt American families. So we've got to all be working together in the same direction, and I'm confident if we do, we'll be making progress.

We are the company—we are the country that invented the Internet. And we're also the pioneers of this Information Age: the creators, the designers, the innovators. Our children are leaving us in the dust, I—if you haven't noticed. [*Laughter*] They're connecting and they're collaborating like never before and imagining a future we can only dream of. When we Americans put our minds together and our shoulder to the wheel, there's nothing we can do. So I'm confident, if we keep at this, we can deliver the prosperity and security and privacy that all Americans deserve.

We pioneered the Internet, but we also pioneered the Bill of Rights and a sense that each of us as individuals have a sphere of privacy around us that should not be breached, whether by our government, but also by commercial interests. And since we're pioneers in both these areas, I'm confident that we can be pioneers in crafting the kind of architecture that will allow us to both grow, innovate, and preserve those values that are so precious to us as Americans.

Thank you very much. And thanks to the FTC for all the great work you do to protect the American people. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:15 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to David Letterman, host, CBS's "Late Show With David Letterman."

Remarks Honoring the 2014 National Basketball Association Champion San Antonio Spurs
January 12, 2015

The President. Well, hello, everybody! Welcome to the White House. Everybody, please have a seat. In case you didn't know, these are the NBA Champion San Antonio Spurs. I was considering having the Vice President cover these remarks so I could stay fresh for the State of the Union. [*Laughter*] Taking an example off Pop, who sits his stars sometimes—[*laughter*]—but I decided I actually wanted to meet them.

So I know we've got a lot of Spurs fans in the house—no doubt—including a guy I stole from San Antonio, our Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, former Mayor Julián Castro. [*Applause*] Hey! And of course we want to welcome General Manager R.C. Buford and,

of course, Coach Popovich. I want the coach to know that he is not contractually obligated to take questions after the first quarter of my remarks. [*Laughter*]

Now, look, I admit it, I'm a Bulls fan. It's never easy celebrating a non-Bulls team in the White House. [*Laughter*] That's all I've been able to do—[*laughter*]—so far. But even I have to admit that the Spurs are hard to dislike. First of all, they're old. [*Laughter*] And for an old guy, it makes me feel good to see—where's Tim? [*Laughter*] Tim's got some gray. There's a few others with a little sprinkles around here. There's a reason why the uniform is black and silver. [*Laughter*] So it makes me feel good to see that folks in advancing years can succeed in a young man's sport.

But it's also because this is an international team. It's the U.N. of basketball teams. And it shows the way that this wonderful sport has become an international sport. Some people have, rightfully, started calling it—the Spur's style of basketball—"the beautiful game." And when you look at the passing and guys backcutting to the hoop and sharing the basketball, you see basketball the way it should be played. And I was telling these guys, you can now see everybody around the league actually stealing, first of all, assistant coaches who then become coaches and then start applying that style of play all around the league. And it's made the game better.

Now, this has not always been the case, all the accolades that the Spur's received. Let's face it, just a little while back, people were saying that the Spurs were passed their prime, not just old, but kind of boring. Now they're fresh and exciting, which is basically the exact opposite of what happens to Presidents. [*Laughter*] It's a different trajectory.

Last season was all about redemption for the Spurs. Everybody remembers the heartbreaking loss—for the Spurs, not for Miami—2 years ago. And game six obviously was crazy. Not—I'm not going to make you relive all the details. As Tony Parker said, it seemed like the basketball gods were just being cruel. But the Spurs came back focused.

And Tim who's not used to—not renowned for his trash-talking, was very clear about the fact that they were going to get back to the Finals. They earned the league's best record, including a franchise-record 19 in a row. Made it back against the Finals and then eviscerated the Heat, winning in five games with an average margin of 14 points, which was the most lopsided margin in Finals history.

Now, that may have been a high-water mark for excellence, but this is an organization that has been marked by excellence, one of the best in professional supports. Since drafting Tim Duncan in 1997, they've won five titles. Tim has now won rings 15 years apart, only the second player in history to win titles in three different decades. Tim and Tony and Manu have—[*laughter*]—won more playoff games than any trio in NBA history.

But what's been remarkable as you watch this team over the decade is not just the incredible play of the Big Three, it's also how the organization always seems to be able to pull together those missing pieces and everybody performing at an incredibly high level. You've got Finals MVP Kawhi Leonard, who played magnificently. You've got Boris Diaw, one of the best passing big men in the game. Tiago Splitter and Danny Green, Patty Mills, Marco Belinelli—who we miss on the Bulls. [*Laughter*] You've got Matt Bonner, who my notes tell me is a sandwich blogger named Red Mamba. [*Laughter*] I mean, how can you not like a guy like that? [*Laughter*] Right on.

And San Antonio has a special bond with its fans. You've—you hear it in the "go Spurs, go" chants. You see it in how the Spurs give back to their community. Coach Popovich has helped the San Antonio Food Bank raise millions of dollars. The Spurs honor our troops and our veterans and their families with camouflage uniforms and discounted tickets. And earlier today they met with some of our wounded warriors from Walter Reed and Fort Belvoir.

And they've been outstanding supporters of San Antonio's East Side, an area I designated as a Promise Zone. They've created literacy programs, bought tablets and computers for schools. Spurs staffers have served as mentors

for young people. So they've been leading in the community; they've been leading in terms of style of play.

I want to commend the Spurs as well for something they did after the championship: hiring Becky Hammon, who's the first female full-time assistant coach in the NBA. And as somebody who has got two daughters, one of who is a baller, it makes me feel good when excellence is recognized regardless of gender.

So that's what the Spurs do. They find ways to put together the best team, whether it means going to Australia or Italy or the WNBA. They want everybody on the court. They think everybody has worth. They find folks who didn't have a chance someplace else, and suddenly, they figure out a way to make them shine as part of a team. And in that sense, they're a great metaphor for what America should be all about.

So I just want to say, once again, congratulations. They're working through some injuries on their quest to another title. But I'll tell you what, if you guys need any tips on winning back to back, you know where to find me. [*Laughter*] So—[*applause*].

Head Coach Gregg C. Popovich. Mine isn't here, sir.

The President. You don't get notes, man. [*Laughter*] Because—mainly, because you just give one-word answers. [*Laughter*]

Coach Popovich. Exactly. What I want to remind the President about—if I might, with all due respect—when I sit stars, I get fined. He doesn't. So—[*laughter*].

But mostly I would just like to say thank you to the President and for all the people here for having us. It truly is an honor to be here. And for me, the most satisfying part is to be able to be with all these guys. They truly have gotten over themselves. They care about the group more than the individual. And I didn't do that. That's in their character. That's who they are.

So it's a pleasure to have them here be honored by all of you, especially so many San Antonio fans and people that know San Antonio. We know that we answer to you all, and we feel that all the time.

The last thing I want to say is, all the pieces that the President talked about that get put together to keep the team at an excellent level, the guy responsible for that is right here, R.C. Buford. He's the guy that does that.

And now we have some things for the President, I believe.

The President. All right, what have we got? We've got some stuff?

[*At this point, the President was presented with a team jersey and a basketball signed by team members.*]

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:44 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Timothy T. Duncan and Tiago Splitter, centers, W. Anthony Parker, Jr., Patrick S. Mills, Emanuel D. Ginobili, and Daniel R. Green, Jr., guards, and Kawhi A. Leonard, Boris B. Diaw-Riffiod, Marco S. Belinelli, and Matthew R. Bonner, forwards, San Antonio Spurs.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Congressional Leaders
January 13, 2015

Well, I want to welcome the congressional leadership here to the White House. Harry Reid is absent because he is still convalescing a little bit from the mishap in the gym, but I know he'll be back strong next week, and I've had a chance to talk to him. I want to thank the Speaker and Leader McConnell, as well as Dick Durbin, filling in for Mr. Reid, and Nancy Pelosi and all the leadership that are here today.

First of all, some of these folks I haven't seen so I haven't had an opportunity to wish them Happy New Year. To the Speaker, I just want to point out—I said there are going to be some things that we agree on—having a college football playoff is clearly something that we can agree on. [*Laughter*] I called for it when I came into office, I think it turned out pretty well, particularly for Ohio—[*laughter*]—so I want to

congratulate the Ohio State Buckeyes for their outstanding victory and commend Oregon as well for fielding a great team, because their quarterback is from my original home State of Hawaii.

And I also want to just talk to all this leadership about how we can keep the progress going that we're seeing, particularly in our economy. The latest job report indicates that the recovery continues to move in a robust fashion. We've now created 58 straight months of private sector job growth, about 11 million jobs created in the private sector. Unemployment rate has come down faster than any time in several decades. We now are seeing the strongest job growth overall, as well as in manufacturing, since the 1990s. We are producing more energy than ever before. The deficit has been cut by two-thirds. And we're finally starting to see some movement last year in wages going up at a time when families are also enjoying some lower gas prices.

So we're in a position to make sure that 2015 is an even stronger year, and relative to our competitors, we are holding much better cards. The key now is for us to work as a team to make sure that we build on this progress. Obviously, there are disagreements around the table on a whole range of issues, but there are also areas where we can agree, and that's where we're going to be focused.

Just to cite a few examples, I've got a State of the Union next week. One of the things we're going to be talking about is cybersecurity. With the Sony attacks that took place, with the Twitter account that was hacked by Islamist jihadist sympathizers yesterday, it just goes to show how much more work we need to do, both public and private sector, to strengthen our cybersecurity to make sure that families' bank accounts are safe, to make sure that our public infrastructure is safe. I've talked to both the Speaker as well as Mitch McConnell about this, and I think we agree that this is an area where we can work hard together, get some legislation done, and make sure that we are much more effective in protecting the American people from these kinds of cyber attacks.

I think that there's going to be opportunities for us to work together on trade. There's going to be opportunities for us to work together on simplifying the tax system and making sure everybody is paying their fair share. There are going to be opportunities for us to streamline Government so it's more responsible. And on each of these issues, I'm going to be listening to everybody around this table, and I'm hopeful that in the spirit of cooperation and putting America first, we can be in position where, at the end of this year, we'll be able to look back and say we're that much better off than we were when we started the year.

So I just wanted to thank everybody for being here, and I'm very much looking forward to not just this discussion, but some real collaboration over the course of the next several months. All right?

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:13 a.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Marcus A.T. Mariota, quarterback, University of Oregon football team.

Remarks at the National Cybersecurity and Communications Integration Center in Arlington, Virginia
January 13, 2015

Good afternoon, everybody. I want to thank Secretary Johnson, Deputy Secretary Mayorkas, and the dedicated public servants of the Department of Homeland Security for welcoming me here today. I've kind of taken over your workspace. I apologize for that, but just pretend that I'm not here. [*Laughter*] I want you to keep working. I did ask who dressed up for this event, and apparently, a few were brave enough to admit it.

But in advance of my State of the Union Address next week, I've been rolling out my proposals for keeping our economy on track, keeping it growing, making sure we're creating jobs and opportunity for the American people. And that includes the extraordinary opportunities that exist in our digital economy.

Yesterday I announced new proposals to better protect Americans from identity theft and ensure our privacy, including making sure that our kids are safe from digital marketing and intrusions on their privacy based on what they're doing at school. Tomorrow, in Iowa, I'll talk about how we can give more families and communities faster, cheaper access to the broadband that allows them to successfully compete in this global economy. And on Thursday, the Vice President will be in Norfolk to highlight the need to continue to invest in the education and skills for our cybersecurity professionals. But today I am here at DHS to highlight how we can work with the private sector to better protect American companies against cyber threats.

Shortly after I took office, I declared that cyber threats pose an enormous challenge for our country. It's one of the most serious economic and national security challenges we face as a nation. Foreign Governments, criminals, and hackers probe America's computer networks every single day. We saw that again with the attack at Sony, which actually destroyed data and computer hardware that is going to be very costly for that company to clean up. Just yesterday we saw the hack of a military Twitter account and YouTube channel. No military operations were impacted. So far, it appears that no classified information was released. But the investigation is ongoing, and it's a reminder that cyber threats are an urgent and growing danger.

Moreover, much of our critical infrastructure—our financial systems, power grids, pipelines, health care systems—run on networks connected to the Internet. So this is a matter of public safety and of public health. And most of this infrastructure is owned and operated by the private sector. So neither Government nor the private sector can defend the Nation alone. It's going to have to be a shared mission: Government and industry working hand in hand, as partners.

And that's why I've said that protecting our digital infrastructure is a national security priority and a national economic priority. Over the past 6 years, we've pursued a comprehensive strategy, boosting our defenses in Government, sharing more information with the private sector to help them defend themselves, working with industry through what we call the cybersecurity framework not just to respond to threats and recover from attacks, but to prevent and disrupt them in the first place.

And that's where these good folks come in. We are currently at the National Cybersecurity Communications Integration Center, also known as NCCIC. I just got a tour and a briefing. I want to thank everybody here, not just from DHS, but from across Government and the private sector, because, again, this is a shared responsibility.

This center is one of the critical lines of America's cyber defenses. These men and women work around the clock, 24/7, monitoring threats, issuing warnings, sharing information with the private sector, and keeping Americans safe. So as a nation, we owe them thanks, and as a nation, we are making progress. We're more prepared to defend against cyber attacks. But every day, our adversaries are getting more sophisticated and more determined and more plentiful. So every day, we've got to keep upping our game at the same time. We've got to stay ahead of those who are trying to do us harm.

Now, the problem is that Government and the private sector are still not always working as closely together as we should. Sometimes, it's still too hard for Government to share threat information with companies. Sometimes, it's still too hard for companies to share information about cyber threats with the Government. There are legal issues involved and liability issues. Sometimes, companies are reluctant to reveal their vulnerabilities or admit publicly that they have been hacked. At the same time, the American people have a legitimate interest in making sure that Government

is not potentially abusing information that it's received from the private sector.

So all of us—Government and industry—are going to have to keep doing better. The new legislation and proposals I put forward yesterday will help, especially for a strong, single national standard for notifying Americans when their information has been breached. Today I want to announce some additional steps.

First, we're proposing new cybersecurity legislation to promote the greater information sharing we need between Government and the private sector. This builds and improves upon the legislation that we've put forward in the past. It reflects years of extensive discussions with industry. It includes liability protections for companies that share information on cyber threats. It includes essential safeguards to ensure that Government protects privacy and civil liberties even as we're doing our job of safeguarding America's critical information networks.

I raised this issue again and the need for this legislation with congressional leaders this morning, including Speaker Boehner and Leader McConnell, and we all agree that this is a threat that has to be addressed, and I am confident that we should be able to craft bipartisan legislation soon to put these systems in place. We're going to keep on working with Congress to get this done. And in the meantime, we're going to do everything that we can with our existing authorities to make sure industry gets the information it needs to better defend itself.

Second, we're proposing to update the authorities the law—that law enforcement uses to go after cyber criminals. We want to be able to better prosecute those who are involved in cyber attacks, those who are involved in the sale of cyber weapons like botnets and spyware. We want to ensure that we're able to prosecute insiders who steal corporate secrets or individuals' private information. And we want to expand the authority of courts to shut down botnets and other malware. The bottom line: We want cyber criminals to feel the full force of American justice, because they are doing as much damage, if not more, these days as folks who are involved in more conventional crime.

Finally, and since this is a challenge that we can only meet together, I'm announcing that next month, we'll convene a White House summit on cybersecurity and consumer protection. It's a White House summit where we're not going to do it at the White House; we're going to go to Stanford University. And it's going to bring everybody together—industry, tech companies, law enforcement, consumer and privacy advocates, law professors who are specialists in the field, as well as students—to make sure that we work through these issues in a public, transparent fashion.

Because they're hard and they're complicated issues. But if we keep on working on them together and focus on concrete and pragmatic steps that we can take to boost our cybersecurity and our privacy, I'm confident that both our privacy will be more secure and our information, our networks, public health, public safety will be more secure. We're going to keep on at this as a Government, but we're also going to be working with the private sector to detect, prevent, defend, deter against attacks, and to recover quickly from any disruptions or damage. And as long as I'm President, protecting America's digital infrastructure is going to remain a top national security priority.

In closing, I want to say one of the areas I'll be working with Congress is to ensure that we don't let any disagreements keep us from fulfilling our most basic responsibilities. Last week's attack in Paris was a painful reminder that we have no greater duty than the security of the American people. And our national security should never be subject to partisan political games. Congress needs to fully fund our Department of Homeland Security, without delay, so that the dedicated public servants working here can operate with the certainty and confidence they need to keep the American people safe. And that's true across the board in the Department of Homeland Security.

So again, I want to thank Jeh and Deputy Secretary Mayorkas and everybody here at

NCCIC and DHS for the great job you are doing. You are helping to keep the Nation safe and secure.

And with that, we're going to get out of here so you can get back to work. Who knows what's been happening while you've been paying attention to me? [*Laughter*] All right? Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:10 p.m.

Statement on the Resignation of Acting Chair of the Council on Environmental Quality Michael J. Boots
January 13, 2015

I want to thank Mike Boots for his service to the American people over the past 6 years, including his tenure as one of my top environmental advisers. It is no coincidence that Mike's leadership of the Council on Environmental Quality has coincided with historic national progress on climate change and conservation. His deep policy expertise and his work with mayors, Governors, and other local leaders have guided my actions to strengthen our Nation's infrastructure and address the threats communities face from climate change. His leadership has helped me fulfill the pledge I made a year ago to protect the pristine and special places Americans care about, including by permanently preserving more than 260 million acres of environmentally and culturally significant lands and waters as national monuments. The country is better off because of Mike's contribution, and I wish him all the best in his future endeavors.

Remarks at Cedar Falls Utilities in Cedar Falls, Iowa
January 14, 2015

The President. Hello, Cedar Falls!

Audience members. Hello!

Audience member. Welcome!

The President. Thank you. It's good to be back.

Well, first of all, give Marc a big round of applause for the introduction and the great work he's doing. I also want to thank Mayor Jon Crews as well as Jim Krieg and the whole team here at Cedar Falls Utilities for hosting us here today. Give them a big round of applause.

We've got our Commerce Secretary, Penny Pritzker, here, as well as Iowa Congressman Dave Loebsack and Attorney General Tom Miller. [*Applause*] Yay, Tom! And I was reminded by the president that we have to give a shout-out to a top-25 basketball team that you've got here in town. The president was lobbying me about putting them in my brackets. I said, it's a little early. [*Laughter*] I've got to kind of see what happens the second half of the season.

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]

The President. [*Laughter*] The Panthers are putting together a heck of a season again. And I think most folks learned a few years ago that when March rolls around, you do not bet against UNI.

Now, it's great to be back. I've seen a lot of good friends. Unfortunately, they're not giving me time to grab a beer down at the Pump Haus this trip, although I understand the mayor said he'd brought a Bud Light with me—or for me. The mayor brought a Bud Light, and he's trying to sneak it around Secret Service. [*Laughter*] But obviously, it's wonderful coming back to Iowa, even during winter, in fact, especially in the cold. These folks in Washington can't handle the cold. We know how to handle cold in the Midwest.

And here in Iowa, on a cold January caucus night about 7 years ago, we talked about change and said that it was time for us to move this country in a new direction. And obviously,

a lot has changed. I'm much grayer, for example. [*Laughter*]

As a country, we fought through the worst financial crisis and recession in our lifetimes. But the American people showed a lot of resilience and resolve. And there is no doubt about it: Thanks to the steps that we took early to rescue the economy, to rebuild it on a new foundation, America is coming back.

Last year was the strongest year for job growth since the 1990s. Unemployment fell in 2014 faster than any year since 1984. Our businesses have created more than 11 million jobs in the last 58 straight months. That's the longest stretch of private sector job growth in American history. Since 2010, America has put more people back to work than Europe, Japan, and every other advanced economy combined. And a lot of folks talk about some of the jobs are being created in the service sector, they're not paying as much. The truth is, American manufacturing is in its best stretch of job growth since the 1990s. Manufacturing is actually growing faster than the rest of the economy. Meanwhile, America is now the number-one producer of oil and gas in the world. And by the way, you're saving about a buck-20 a gallon at the pump over this time last year.

So these past 6 years were trying, demanded a lot of hard work, a lot of sacrifice on everybody's part. But as a country, we have a right to be proud about what we've got to show for it. America's resurgence is real, and we're better position than any country on Earth to succeed in the 21st century.

Now, on Tuesday, I'm going to deliver my State of the Union Address, and in my speech, I'm going to focus on how we can build on the progress we've already made and help more Americans feel that resurgence in their daily lives, with higher wages and rising incomes and growing our middle class. But since I only got 2 years in office left, I'm kind of in a rush—[*laughter*]—so I didn't want to wait until the State of the Union to share some of my ideas and some of my plans.

I've been traveling across the country rolling out some of these ideas: plans to help more families afford a home, plans to make more students—can attend community college without loading up with debt, plans to make more workers find good jobs in high-tech manufacturing. And in the 21st century, in this age of innovation and in technology, so much of the prosperity that we're striving for, so many of the jobs that we want to create depend on our digital economy. It depends on our ability to connect and to shop and to do business and discover and learn online, in cyberspace.

So this week, I've been laying out new proposals on how we can keep seizing these opportunities in this Information Age, while at the same time protecting our security and our privacy and our prosperity and our values. On Monday, I announced new steps to protect American consumers from identity theft and make sure that your privacy is protected. Yesterday I spoke at the Department of Homeland Security about how we can work with the private sector to better defend American companies against cyber attacks.

Today I'm in Cedar Falls to talk about how we can give more communities access to faster, cheaper broadband so they can succeed in the digital economy. And I'm not telling you anything you don't already know. Today, high-speed broadband is not a luxury, it's a necessity. This isn't just about making it easier to stream Netflix or scroll through your Facebook newsfeed, although that's fun—[*laughter*]—and it is frustrating if you're waiting for a long time before the thing finally comes up. [*Laughter*] This is about helping local businesses grow and prosper and compete in a global economy. It's about giving the entrepreneur, the small businessperson on Main Street a chance to compete with the folks out in Silicon Valley or across the globe. It's about helping a student access the online courses and employment opportunities that can help her pursue her dreams.

And that's why, through the Recovery Act, when I first came into office and we were trying to make sure that we prevented a Great Depression, but also start building some foundations for long-term growth, we built or improved more than 113,000 miles of network infrastructure throughout the country. That's

enough to circle the globe more than four times. And we offered tax credits to help spur businesses to expand their networks. We've hooked up tens of thousands of schools and libraries and medical facilities and community organizations. And then, we launched something we call ConnectED, which trains teachers and spurs private sector innovation and is connecting 99 percent of America's students to high-speed Internet.

But—and this is why I'm here—we've still got a lot of work to do. Right now 98 percent of Americans have access to the most basic levels of broadband, and that's a good thing. But that number doesn't look quite as good when you look at the speeds we're going to need for all the apps and the videos and all the data and new software that is constantly coming onto market. We've got to keep pace. We've got to be up to speed.

Right now about 45 million Americans cannot purchase next-generation broadband. And those are—that next generation of broadband creates connections that are six or seven times faster than today's basic speeds. And by the way, only about half of rural Americans can log on at that superfast rate.

And if folks do have good, fast Internet, chances are, they only got one provider to pick from and today, tens of millions of Americans have only one choice for that next-generation broadband, so they're pretty much at the whim of whatever Internet provider is around. And what happens when there's no competition? You're stuck on hold. You're watching the loading icon spin. You're waiting and waiting and waiting. And meanwhile, you're wondering why your rates keep on getting jacked up when the service doesn't seem to improve.

Now, in Cedar Falls, things are different. About 20 years ago, in a visionary move ahead of its time, this city voted to add another option to the market and invest in a community broadband network. Really smart thing you guys did. [*Applause*] It was a really smart thing you guys did. And you've managed it right here at Cedar Falls Utilities. Then, a few years ago, you realized that customers were demanding more and more speed. All the movies, all the increased data, Instagram—all this stuff suddenly is just being loaded up, and basically, you guys were like the captain in "Jaws," where he said, "We're going to need a bigger boat." [*Laughter*]

So having already made the smart investment 20 years ago, about 5 years ago you said, we've got to upgrade to a fiber network throughout the city and, eventually, with the help of some Federal funding, the surrounding rural areas as well.

So today, Cedar Falls is Iowa's first Gigabit City. Now, that sounds like something out of a Star Wars movie, Gigabit City. Here's what it means: Your network is as fast as some of the best networks in the world. There's Hong Kong, Tokyo, Paris, Cedar Falls. [*Laughter*] Right? That's the company you're keeping.

You are almost a hundred times faster than the national average—a hundred times faster. And you can log on for about the same price as some folks pay for a fully loaded cable bundle. So today, you've got small businesses like Marc's that are serving clients worldwide. Google named you the best city in Iowa for e-commerce. And what you're showing is that here in America, you don't have to be the biggest community to do really big things, you just have to have some vision, and you have to work together.

And we're seeing that same kind of innovation and that same kind of energy and foresight in communities across the country. In Lafayette, Louisiana, companies are bringing jobs to the city in part because of their fast, next-generation broadband network. In November, the people of Yuma County, Colorado, voted overwhelmingly in favor of a community broadband network. That's in the same election where 85 percent of folks just voted for a Republican Senate candidate. So this is not a partisan issue. It's not a red issue or a blue issue. Folks just want to know that they're at the cutting edge of this new economy. Folks around the Nation want these broadband networks. They're good for business. They're good for communities. They're good for schools. And they're good for the marketplace because they promote efficiency and competition.

Here in Cedar Falls, if you don't want the highest speed package, you can still choose between the Cedar Falls Utilities or options like Mediacom or CenturyLink. It's not like you don't have choices. You can pick the company that offers the best service at the lowest cost for your family's needs. That's how free markets and capitalism are supposed to work.

But here's the catch: In too many place across America, some big companies are doing everything they can to keep out competitors. Today, in 19 States, we've got laws on the books that stamp out competition and make it really difficult for communities to provide their own broadband the way you guys are. In some States, it is virtually impossible to create a community network like the one that you've got here in Cedar Falls. So today I'm saying we're going to change that. Enough is enough. We're going to change that so every community can do the smart things you guys are doing.

So not long ago, I made my position clear on what's called net neutrality. I believe we've got to maintain a free and open Internet. Today I'm making my administration's position clear on community broadband. I'm saying I'm on the side of competition. And I'm on the side of small-business owners like Marc. I'm on the side of students and schools. I believe that a community has the right to make its own choice and to provide its own broadband if it wants to. Nobody is going to force you to do it, but if you want to do it, if the community decides this is something that we want to do to give ourselves a competitive edge and to help our young people and our businesses, they should be able to do it.

And if there are State laws in place that prohibit or restrict these community-based efforts, all of us—including the FCC, which is responsible for regulating this area—should do everything we can to push back on those old laws. I believe that's what stands out about America, this belief that more competition means better products and cheaper prices. We do that with just about every other product. We ought to be doing it with broadband. It's just common sense.

And that's why leaders from 50 cities and towns across the country—it's a coalition called Next Century Cities—have pledged to bring next-generation broadband to their cities and towns. And that's why I'm announcing a series of additional actions to support their efforts and encourage more communities to follow your lead, Cedar Falls. I'm directing Federal agencies to get rid of unnecessary regulations that slow the expansion of broadband or limit competition. They're going to report back to me in 6 months. The Department of Commerce—Penny Pritzker, who is here—they're going to work to offer support and tactical assistance to communities that want to follow your lead and set up their own networks. USDA—the Department of Agriculture—is announcing new loan opportunities for rural providers. And this summer, I'll host mayors from around the Nation at a community broadband summit to chart the next steps that we need to take.

So that's what we're going to be doing. We're going to clear away redtape. We're going to foster competition. We're going to help communities connect and help communities succeed in our digital economy.

And the good news is, we know it works because of you. [*Laughter*] You guys were like the guinea pigs on this thing. You took a chance and you made something happen. And you're supporting the jobs of the future through faster, cheaper Internet. We want everybody to do that.

Now, I want to leave you with a story of another community that has done this as well. Chattanooga, Tennessee—it's an old railroad town—was once called the dirtiest city in the Nation. During the recession, they were hit harder than most places. But that did not stop them from building America's first citywide, high-speed, fiber network, right down the middle of downtown. It's as fast as what you guys have got here in Cedar Falls.

Today, a new generation of engineers and entrepreneurs have moved down to Chattanooga. Big businesses have set up shop. Volkswagen built a billion-dollar manufacturing plant. It's unleashing a tornado of innovation.

The city is even testing out futuristic technologies like 3–D holograms. And here's what their former mayor said: "It's like having"—"It's like being the first city to have fire." [*Laughter*] "We don't know all of the things we can do with it yet."

Yet. But think about that. And when you're first in something, when you figure something out, you may not know all the applications right away, but that's the spirit of America: imagining what might come next. We may not always know what's right around the corner, but we know we'll figure it out as long as we're bold and we go ahead and work together.

We've been through some very hard times. We didn't always know those hard times were coming, but we pulled together, we worked together, we relied on each other, we believed in each other, and we figured it out.

We're blessed with the greatest natural resource in the world—not corn—[*laughter*]—but the pluck and the ingenuity and the willingness to take risks of the American people. And I'm absolutely confident, if we just give Americans the tools they need, if we just help lay the foundation and allow them to access the amazing opportunities and technologies at this moment in world history, we're not just going to continue recovering from a bad recession, we're going to ignite the next generation of American innovation. And it's going to start right here in Cedar Falls, Iowa.

Thank you. God bless you. God bless America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:35 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Marc Reifenrath, president, Spinutech; William N. Ruud, president, University of Northern Iowa; Sen. Cory S. Gardner; and former Mayor Ron C. Littlefield of Chattanooga, TN.

Remarks at Charmington's Cafe in Baltimore, Maryland
January 15, 2015

Hello, everybody. I want to thank Amanda and the whole crew here at this wonderful coffee shop. And I also want to thank Vika and Mary, as well as the senior Senator from the State of Maryland, Barbara Mikulski.

We've had a great conversation about the announcements I'm making today and that I'll amplify in the State of the Union about how can we support working families so that they have the tools to succeed in this new economy.

Now, part of the reality of the new economy is that 60 percent of households have at—two people working, and if they've got kids or they've got an ailing parent, juggling both doing right by their families and making a living can be tough.

Now, one of the biggest problems that we have is that there are 43 million Americans who don't get paid sick leave, which, when you think about, is a pretty astonishing statistic. And that means that no matter how sick they are or how sick a family member is, they may find themselves having to choose to be able to buy groceries or pay the rent or look after themselves or their children.

And part of the reason we wanted to have this conversation here was because Amanda, is part of the cooperative that opened this coffee shop, is really adamant, as a small business, in looking after their employees and providing paid sick leave, in making sure that they're paying above minimum wage. And what Amanda's found—and we've heard this from a lot of employers—is, is that when they make that investment in their employees it pays dividends because the employees are more productive, there's lower turnover, there's greater productivity. And in fact, both large and small companies, it turns out, end up being more profitable over the long term, because, typically, any organization and certainly business is only going to be as good as its people.

We had a chance to hear from Mary, who is a school nurse as well as a small-businesswoman, and Mary made the point that even now, she finds herself in a situation where during flu season, you've got a kid who is at school, has a

bad flu, she needs to call the parent to try to get them to pick up their kid, and the parent can't do it because they risk losing their job or losing a big chunk of their paycheck. And that obviously puts everybody else's kids at risk because you've got a sick child who can infect others.

Vika talked about a time in her life when she was basically a consultant, having small children and trying to juggle looking after them. And each time that she had to take a day off, that might cost her $150, which, when you're a young family getting started, that's going to have an impact on whether or not you can save to ultimately buy a home or start putting away savings for a college education.

So this is an issue that spans geography, spans demographics. Working families, middle class folks all across the country are concerned about it. And the good news is, we really can do something about it.

So today I'm going to be announcing our support and advocacy on behalf of a national 7-days—7 sick-day policy all across the country. And we're going to go beat the drum across cities and States to encourage not only that these laws are adopted nationally, but also that employers start adopting these policies as well.

And we're also going to help cities and States study and look at the feasibility of paid sick leave generally—or, excuse me, paid family leave generally, because we already have laws in place, the Family Medical Leave Act, that allows people to take the time off to look after their sick child or sick parent, but unfortunately, a lot of people just can't afford to take advantage of it.

So the good news is, the economy has picked up speed. We are past the point of crisis. We've seen 58 straight months of job growth. We have seen 11 million jobs created. The economy is stable and is building momentum. Now we have to make sure that that economy is benefiting everybody.

And by adopting this working families agenda, thinking about how we can provide more flexibility to families, thinking about how we can make sure that moms and dads don't have to choose between looking after their kids and doing what they need to do at work, thinking about all those families that are now trying to care for an aging parent—that kind of flexibility ultimately is going to make our economy stronger and is just one piece of what needs to be a really aggressive push to ensure that if you work hard in this country, then you can make it.

So I just want to thank this outstanding venue. The food was great. And I ate a little too much, but that's okay; it was off camera. [*Laughter*] I want to thank Mary, Vika, Amanda, and somebody who has been a champion for working families here in Maryland and across the country for a very long time, Barbara Mikulski.

All right? Thanks, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:46 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Amanda Rothschild, co-owner and managing partner, Charmington's; Morvika Jordan, accounts payable analyst, Addit Healthcare, LLC; and Mary Stein, nurse, Howard County Public Schools.

The President's News Conference With Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom
January 16, 2015

President Obama. Please have a seat. Good afternoon, everybody.

This month marks a notable anniversary: 200 years since the Battle of New Orleans. Now, here in America, we call it a great victory over a mighty United Kingdom. Our British friends call it a technicality. [*Laughter*] The treaty ending the war was signed weeks before.

Either way, we've long since made up. On this 200th anniversary of a great American victory, we count the United Kingdom as one of our greatest friends and strongest allies. And today it's a great pleasure to welcome Prime

Minister David Cameron back to the White House.

Now, as many of you know, David recently noted how comfortable the two of us are working together. This sent some commentators into a tizzy. Some explored the linguistic origins of the word "bro." [*Laughter*] Others debated its definition. Several analyzed how this term has evolved over time. Some seemed confused and asked, "What does Obama mean?"

And so let me put this speculation to rest. Put simply, David is a great friend. He's one of my closest and most trusted partners in the world. On many of the most pressing challenges that we face, we see this—the world the same way. We recognize that, as I've said before, when the United States and United Kingdom stand together, our nations are more secure, and our people are more prosperous, and the world is safer and more just. Great Britain is our indispensable partner, and David has been personally an outstanding partner, and I thank you for your friendship.

With both of our economies growing and unemployment falling, we used our working dinner last night to discuss how we can help create more jobs for our people. We believe that this needs to be the year when the United States and the European Union make real progress toward the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership. And we share the view that boosting demand in Europe can also keep our economies growing.

As innovative economies in this Information Age, we're expanding our collaboration on digital technologies to improve how our governments serve our citizens and businesses. Given the urgent and growing danger of cyber threats, we decided to expand our cooperation on cybersecurity to protect our critical infrastructure, our businesses, and the privacy of our people. And as leaders in the global fight against climate change, we believe that a strong commitment to reducing greenhouse gases will be an essential element of any ambitious climate agreement that we seek in Paris this year and that this actually will help spur the creation of more clean energy jobs on both sides of the Atlantic.

With regard to security, American-British unity is enabling us to meet challenges in Europe and beyond. We agree on the need to maintain strong sanctions against Russia until it ends its aggression in Ukraine and on the need to support Ukraine as it implements important economic and democratic reforms. We agree that the international community needs to remain united as we seek a comprehensive diplomatic solution to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon. And I'd add that additional sanctions on Iran at this time would undermine that international unity and set back our chances for a diplomatic solution. And as the two leading contributors to the global response to Ebola in West Africa, we urge the world to continue stepping up with the resources that are required so that we don't simply stop this disease, we do more to prevent future epidemics.

Now, much of our discussion obviously focused on the continuing threat of terrorism. And in the wake of the vicious attacks in Paris, as well as the news surfacing out of Belgium today, we continue to stand unequivocally not only with our French friends and allies, but with also all of our partners who are dealing with this scourge. I know David joins me when I say that we will continue to do everything in our power to help France seek the justice that is needed and that all our countries are working together seamlessly to prevent attacks and to defeat these terrorist networks.

With our combat mission in Afghanistan over, we're also focused with our NATO allies on advising and assisting and equipping Afghan forces to secure their own country and deny to Al Qaida any safe haven there. We'll continue to count on our British allies as our—one of our strongest counterterrorism partners, whether it's helping countries fight back against Al Qaida affiliates or Boko Haram in Nigeria.

We reviewed our coalition's progress against ISIL. We are systematically taking out their fighters, we're destroying their infrastructure, we are putting them on the defensive and helping local forces in Iraq push these terrorists back. And David and I agree that we need

to keep stepping up the training of Iraqi forces and that we're not going to relent until this terrorist organization is destroyed.

The Paris attacks also underscored again how terrorist groups like Al Qaida and ISIL are actively trying to inspire and support people within our own countries to engage in terrorism. I led a special session of the United Nations Security Council last fall to rally the world to meet the threat of foreign terrorist fighters, including coming from Syria. David and the United Kingdom continue to be strong partners in this work, including sharing intelligence and strengthening border security.

At the same time, we both recognize that intelligence and military force alone is not going to solve this problem. So we're also going to keep working together on strategies to counter the violent extremism that radicalizes, recruits, and mobilizes people—especially young people—to engage in terrorism. And local communities—families, neighbors, faith leaders—have a vital role to play in that effort.

We also look forward to welcoming our British friends to our summit next month on countering violent terrorism. Because whether in Europe or in America, a critical weapon against terrorism is our adherence to our freedoms and values at home, including the pluralism and the respect and tolerance that defines us as diverse and democratic societies.

And finally, I want to take this opportunity to publicly congratulate David on last month's Stormont House Agreement. It's a tribute to the courage and determination of everyone involved, especially the leaders of Northern Ireland as well as the governments of Ireland and the United Kingdom. The United States was pleased to play a small role in achieving this agreement, and we're going to keep doing what we need to do to support the peace process and a better future for the people of Northern Ireland.

So with that, let me turn it over to my good friend David Cameron.

Prime Minister Cameron. Well, thank you very much, Barack. And thank you for welcoming me again to the White House. You are a great friend to Britain and to me personally. As leaders, we share the same values, and as you said, on so many issues, we see the world in the same way. And most of the time, we speak the same language. [*Laughter*]

In the last 6 years since you became President, and in the nearly 5 since I've been Prime Minister, we've faced some big issues on our watch. And those challenges have boiled down to one word: security. Economic security—the jobs and the living standards of our citizens—and national security, the ability of our peoples to live safely and in peace.

And at the heart of both issues are the values that our countries cherish: freedom of expression, the rule of law, and our democratic institutions. Those are the things that make both our countries strong and which give us confidence that even in the midst of the most violent storms, with strong leadership, we will come through to safer, to calmer and to brighter days.

During your Presidency, you've had to deal with the aftermath of a massive banking crisis and a deep recession. When I became Prime Minister, Britain had the highest budget deficit in its peacetime history; our economy was in grave peril. Five years ago, we had 110,000 troops serving together in Afghanistan. Thanks to their efforts, today it is Afghan forces taking responsibility for security in their country.

But we continue to face difficult times for the world. First and foremost, we have to deal with the warning lights flashing in the global economy: weak growth in the euro zone, slowdown in emerging markets. That is why it is vital for our shared prosperity that we both stick to the long-term economic plans that we've set out.

We agreed that 2015 should be a pivotal year for an ambitious and comprehensive EU-U.S. trade deal, which could benefit the average household in Britain by £400 a year. The U.K. is now the top destination for American and foreign investment, with 500 projects last year providing 32,000 jobs. And America is the U.K.'s biggest trade partner, with exports worth nearly £90 billion. We want to build on this.

So our message on the economy today is simple: We are going to stick to the course. Because seeing through our economic plans is the only sustainable way to create jobs, to raise living standards, and to secure a better future for hard-working people.

Now, Britain and America both face threats to our national security from people who hate what our countries stand for and who are determined to do us harm. In recent weeks, we've seen appalling attacks in Paris, in Peshawar, in Nigeria. The world is sickened by this terrorism, so we will not be standing alone in this fight. We know what we're up against, and we know how we will win.

We face a poisonous and fanatical ideology that wants to pervert one of the world's major religions, Islam, and create conflict, terror, and death. With our allies, we will confront it wherever it appears. In Iraq, the U.K. is the second largest contributor to the anti-ISIL coalition. RAF aircraft have conducted over a hundred strikes and will continue to play a leading role. We will deploy additional intelligence and surveillance assets to help Iraqi forces on the ground, and we will ensure they are better trained and equipped to counter explosive devices.

But most important of all, we must also fight this poisonous ideology, starting at home. In the U.K., we're passing a law so that every public body must combat extremism. And this morning we have agreed to establish a joint group to identify what more we can do to counter the rise of domestic violent extremism and to learn from one another.

In Europe, Russia has chosen to tear up the international rulebook and trample over the affairs of a sovereign state. This threatens our stability and our prosperity. It is important that every country understands that and that no one in Europe forgets our history. We cannot walk on by. So we will continue to put pressure on Russia to resolve this crisis diplomatically, and at the same time, we will continue our efforts to support Ukraine on the path of reform, including with financial assistance. We also reaffirmed our obligations as NATO partners to stand by our allies, and we'll be contributing an additional thousand troops for exercises in Eastern Europe this year.

On Iran, we remain absolutely committed to ensuring that Iran cannot develop a nuclear weapon. The best way to achieve that now is to create the space for negotiations to succeed. We should not impose further sanctions now; that would be counterproductive, and it could put at risk the valuable international unity that has been so crucial to our approach.

We also have to keep pace with new threats, such as cyber attacks. We've discussed that in the last 2 days, and we've today agreed to deepen our cybersecurity cooperation to better protect ourselves.

Finally, we face—the entire world faces—a growing threat from diseases. Today, our fight is against Ebola. In the future, it could be against a global flu pandemic. Through our action in Sierra Leone, the U.S. action in Liberia, France in Guinea, we are beginning to turn the corner, but we must get better at responding to these global health emergencies and make sure we can master them before they master us.

So reforming the WHO, the World Health Organization, establishing a team of experts to be on standby to deploy anywhere in the world, a new international platform to stimulate the design and development of new drugs—all of these things are needed. And let 2015, the year we must crack Ebola, also be the year we tackle extreme poverty and climate change.

On poverty, we must set new, clear goals to eradicate extreme poverty, to fight corruption, and to build strong institutions. And on climate change, we want an outcome in Paris that keeps our goal of limiting global warming by 2050 to 2 degrees within reach. These two things—and they go together—have the potential to give security to future generations to come.

For almost two centuries, after those little difficulties we were discussing earlier—[*laughter*]—America and Britain have stood as kindred spirits in defending our freedoms and advancing our shared prosperity. Today, as we survey a world in flux, our alliance stands strong, rooted in its long history, and

reinvigorated by the challenges we face today. If our forebears could join us here in the White House today, they might find the challenges that we're facing—from ISIL to Ebola, from cyberterrorism to banking crises—they might find those hard to comprehend, but they would surely recognize the ties that bind us across the Atlantic and the values that our peoples hold so dear.

We've stood together so often, not just because we've faced common threats, but because we fundamentally believe in the same things. That is as true today as it has always been, and it hugely benefits our countries and the people that we're here to serve.

Thank you very much.

President Obama. Thank you, David. We're going to take a few questions. We're going to start with Jonathan Karl of ABC.

2012 Republican Presidential Nominee W. Mitt Romney/Iran

Q. Mr. President, you mentioned your—wrong mike. You mentioned your opposition to the sanctions bill on Iran, and this is obviously a bipartisan bill supported by some very senior top members of your own party in Congress. Why do you oppose a bill that would only impose sanctions if you fail to reach an agreement? And if the Iranians fail to agree to take steps to curtail their nuclear program, would you go so far as to veto a bill supported by top Democrats in Congress on this issue?

And to Mr. Prime Minister, I understand you've been making phone calls to Senators on this issue of the Iran sanctions bill. Is that correct? Are you actually lobbying the U.S. Congress on this?

And if I may, Mr. President, I'd really like to hear your reaction to the news that Mitt Romney is thinking about running for President again. [*Laughter*]

President Obama. On your last question—[*laughter*]—I have no comment. [*Laughter*]

Q. None at all?

President Obama. On your first question, when I came into office, I made a commitment that Iran would not obtain a nuclear weapon, that we would do everything we could to prevent that. And that is important for our security, and it's important for the world's security. If Iran obtained a nuclear weapon, then it would trigger an arms race in the Middle East, make our job in terms of preventing the proliferation of nuclear materials much more difficult. Given their missile capabilities, it would threaten directly our closest allies, including Israel, and ultimately could threaten us.

And so what we did was systematically, with the help of Congress, construct the most forceful, most effective sanctions regime in modern history. And what was remarkable was that when I came into office, the world was divided around this issue, and Iran was united. And through some very strong diplomatic work, we united the world and isolated Iran. And it's because of that work that we brought them to the negotiating table, not for posturing, not for meetings that lead nowhere, but to a very hard-nosed, nuts-and-bolt discussion of their nuclear program.

Now, the interim deal that we entered into also froze progress on their nuclear program, rolled back in some cases the stockpiles of material that they had already accumulated, and provided us insight into their program that was unprecedented. We have people on the ground who are able to verify and inspect and tell us what exactly is going on. That's not just our assessment, that's the assessment of intelligence services around the world, including the Israelis.

So the agreement has held, and the negotiations have been serious. We have not lost ground. Iran has not accelerated its program during the time these negotiations have taken place. In fact, Iran's program has not only been in abeyance, but we've actually made gains in rolling back some of the stockpiles that they have.

Now, we have on the table currently a series of negotiations over the next several months to determine whether or not Iran can get to yes. And what's been remarkable is the unity that we have maintained with the world in isolating Iran and forcing them to negotiate in a serious way. The P5-plus-1 includes not only China, but also includes Russia. And they have contin-

ued to cooperate with us in setting forth positions that would give us assurances that Iran was not developing a nuclear weapon.

Now, I've always said that the chances that we can actually get a diplomatic deal are probably less than 50/50. Iran is a regime that is deeply suspicious of the West, deeply suspicious of us. In the past, they have surreptitiously and secretly advanced aspects of this program. We have huge differences with them on a whole range of issues. But if in fact we still have an opportunity to get a diplomatic deal that provides us verifiable assurances that they are not developing a nuclear weapon, that is the best possible outcome that we can arrive at right now.

And the question I had for Members of Congress, including those folks in my own party, is, why is it that we would have to take actions that might jeopardize the possibility of getting a deal over the next 60 to 90 days? What is it precisely that is going to be accomplished?

I can tell you what the risks are, and I think David shares my assessment here. Under the interim deal that brought Iran to the table, we were not supposed to initiate new sanctions. Now, you'll hear arguments saying, "Well, these technically aren't new sanctions, they're simply laws putting in place the possibility of additional sanctions." I assure you, that is not how Iran would interpret it or our partners would interpret it.

So the likelihood of the entire negotiations collapsing is very high. And if that happens, there is no constraint on Iran at that point going back and doing exactly what it had been doing before they came to the table: developing a heavy-water reactor that, once built, is extraordinarily difficult to dismantle and very difficult to hit militarily; going back at underground facilities that are very hard to reach militarily; accelerating advanced centrifuges that shorten the timespan in which they can achieve breakout capacity.

And they would be able to maintain that the reason that they ended negotiations was because the United States was operating in bad faith and blew up the deal, and there would be some sympathy to that view around the world, which means that the sanctions that we have in place now would potentially fray, because imposing these sanctions are a hardship on a number of countries around the world. They would love to be able to buy Iranian oil. And the reason that they've hung in there, despite it being against their economic interests, is because we have shown that we are credibly trying to solve this problem and avert some sort of military showdown.

Now, in that context, there is no good argument for us to try to undercut, undermine the negotiations until they've played themselves out. Now, if Iran ends up ultimately not being able to say yes, if they cannot provide us the kind of assurances that would lead myself and David Cameron and others to conclude that they are not obtaining a nuclear weapon, then we're going to have to explore other options. And I assure—I will be the first one to come to Congress and say we need to tighten the screws.

And by the way, that's not the only options that are going to be available. I've consistently said we leave all options on the table. But Congress should be aware that if this diplomatic solution fails, then the risks and likelihood that this ends up being at some point a military confrontation is heightened, and Congress will have to own that as well, and that will have to be debated by the American people. And we may not be able to rebuild the kind of coalition we need in that context if the world believes that we were not serious about negotiations.

So I take this very seriously. And I don't question the good faith of some folks who think this might be helpful. But it's my team that's at the table. We are steeped in this stuff day in, day out. We don't make these judgments blindly. We have been working on this for 5, 6, 7 years. We consult closely with allies like the United Kingdom in making these assessments. And I am asking Congress to hold off, because our negotiators, our partners, those who are most intimately involved in this, assess that it will jeopardize the possibility of resolving a—providing a diplomatic solution to one of the most difficult and long lasting national security

problems that we've faced in a very long time. And Congress needs to show patience.

So I—with respect to the veto, I said to my Democratic caucus colleagues yesterday that I will veto a bill that comes to my desk, and I will make this argument to the American people as to why I'm doing so. And I respectfully request them to hold off for a few months to see if we have the possibility of solving a big problem without resorting potentially to war. And I think that's worth doing. We'll see if—how persuasive I am, but if I'm not persuading Congress, I promise you, I'm going to be taking my case to the American people on this.

Prime Minister Cameron. I think the big picture is very clear. The sanctions that America and the European Union put in place have had an effect. That has led to pressure. That pressure has led to talks. And those talks at least have a prospect of success. And I would argue with the President, how much better is that than the other potential outcomes? And that is what we should be focusing on.

But to answer you very directly, yes, I have contacted a couple of Senators this morning, and I may speak to one or two more this afternoon. Not in any way as British Prime Minister to tell the American Senate what it should or shouldn't do; that wouldn't be right. But simply to make the point, as a country that stands alongside America in these vital negotiations, that it's the opinion of the United Kingdom that further sanctions or further threat of sanctions at this point won't actually help to bring the talks to a successful conclusion, and they could fracture the international unity that there's been, which has been so valuable in presenting united front to Iran.

And I say this as someone who played quite, I think, a strong role in getting Europe to sign up to the very tough sanctions, including oil sanctions, in the first place. And I would just simply make this point: Those sanctions have had an effect. And to those who said, if you do an interim deal, if you even start discussing with the Iranians any of these things, the sanctions will fall apart, the pressure will dissipate, no one will be able to stick at it—that has demonstrably been shown not to be true.

So the pressure is still there. And as the President says, if the Iranians say no and there is no deal, then by all means, let's sit down and work out what extra sanctions to put in place. Because I think we are absolutely united in a simple thought, which is a deal that takes Iran away from a nuclear weapon is better than either Iran having a nuclear weapon or military action to prevent it. In the end, it comes down to that simple choice. And so will I do what I can to help as one of the countries negotiating? Sure I will.

Q. Do you think the odds are less than 50/50, from what you—[*inaudible*]?

Prime Minister Cameron. I'm—I think the way the President put it, I wouldn't disagree with. It's very hard to know what the Iranian thinking is about this. I'm the first British Prime Minister in 35 years, I think, to meet with an Iranian President, and it's very hard to know what their thinking is.

But there is a very clear offer there, which is to take Iran away from a nuclear weapon and to conclude an agreement with them which would be mutually beneficial. That's what should happen.

I think we've got a question from Nick Robinson of the BBC.

Syria/Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) Terrorist Organization/U.S. Counterterrorism Strategy/United Kingdom-U.S. Counterterrorism Cooperation/International Economy

Q. Mr. Nick Robinson, BBC News. Prime Minister, with extra security being put in place today for the Jewish community and also for police officers, would people be right to conclude that the threat of an attack on the streets of Britain is now all but imminent?

And, Mr. President, you've spoken of the threat posed by fighters coming back from Syria. Do you ever worry that this is a legacy of the decision of the United States and the United Kingdom to in effect stand on the sidelines during Syria's bloody civil war?

And if I may briefly, if you'll forgive me, on the economy, you said you agree. Is he right? Is it time to stick to the plan?

Prime Minister Cameron. Well, first of all, look, we do face a very serious Islamist extremist terrorist threat in Europe, in America, across the world. And we have to be incredibly vigilant in terms of that threat. We've got to strengthen our police and security. We ought to make sure we do everything we can to keep our country safe. And that involves an incredibly hard, long term, patient, disciplined approach.

There is no single, simple thing that needs to be done. It means closing down the ungoverned spaces that the terrorists operate in. It means working against ISIL in Iraq and Syria. It means countering this poisonous, fanatical death cult of a narrative that is perverting the religion of Islam. It means working together with our oldest and best partners so that we share intelligence and security and we try and prevent terrorist atrocities from taking place. It means all of these things, and it is going to be a long, patient, and hard struggle.

I'm quite convinced we will come through it and we will overcome it, because in the end, the values that we hold to—of freedom, of democracy, of having open and tolerant societies—these are the strongest values there can be. And in the end, we will come through. But like some of the challenges our countries have faced together in the past, it will take great discipline, great patience, great, hard work.

You asked specifically the question about imminence. We have a system in the United Kingdom where threat levels are set by the Joint Terrorism Assessment Centre. They're not set by politicians. They have judged that the threat we face is severe. That means, in their words, that an attack is highly likely. If ever there is an imminent threat of attack, it goes to the next level up, which is critical. But it's their decision, not mine. My responsibility is to make sure we marshal everything we have as a country in order to defeat this threat.

Q. On the Jewish community?

Prime Minister Cameron. And on the Jewish community, I think it's good that the metropolitan police have announced that they'll be stepping up on patrols. I met with the Jewish Leadership Council earlier this week. We already provide through their security organization, the Community Security Trust, we already provide Government money to help protect Jewish schools. But I think this is—we have to recognize, in fighting terrorism, as we found in Britain before, you cannot simply rely on policing and security. This is a job for everyone. This is a role that we're all going to have to play in the vigilance and in making sure that we keep our community safe.

President Obama. With respect to Syria and the connection to foreign fighters, there is no doubt that in the chaos and the vacuum that's been created in big chunks of Syria, that that's given an opportunity for foreign fighters to both come in and come back out. And I chaired a U.N. Security Council meeting, and we are now busy working with our partners to implement a series of actions to identify who may be traveling to Syria in order to get trained, to fight, or to hatch plots that would be activated upon return to their home countries. So it's a very serious problem.

The notion that this is occurring because the United States or Great Britain or other countries stood on the sidelines, I think, is—first of all, mischaracterizes our position. We haven't been standing on the sidelines; it's true, we did not invade Syria. If the assertion is, is that, had we invaded Syria, we would be less prone to terrorist attacks, I'll leave it to you to play out that scenario and whether that sounds accurate.

We've been very active in trying to resolve a tragic situation in Syria: diplomatically, through humanitarian efforts, through the removal of chemical weapons from Syria that had been so deadly. And now, as ISIL has moved forward, we've been very active in degrading their capabilities inside of Syria, even as we're working with partners to make sure that the foreign fighter situation is resolved.

But I think David's point is the key one. This phenomenon of violent extremism—the ideology, the networks, the capacity to recruit young people—this has metastasized, and it is widespread, and it has penetrated communities around the world.

I do not consider it an existential threat. As David said, this is one that we will solve. We are stronger, we are representing values that the vast majority of Muslims believe in: in tolerance and in working together to build rather than to destroy. And so this is a problem that causes great heartache and tragedy and destruction, but it is one that ultimately we're going to defeat. But we can't just defeat it through weapons.

One of the things that we spoke about is, how do we lift up those voices that represent the vast majority of the Muslim world so that that counternarrative against this nihilism is put out there as aggressively and as nimbly as the messages coming out from these fanatics? How do we make sure that we are working with local communities and faith leaders and families—whether in a neighborhood in London or a neighborhood in Detroit, Michigan—so that we are inoculating ourselves against this kind of ideology? And that's going to be slow, plodding, systematic work, but it's work that I'm confident we're going to be able to accomplish, particularly when we've got strong partners like the United Kingdom doing it.

Q. On the economy, sir.

President Obama. On the economy, I would note that Great Britain and the United States are two economies that are standing out at a time when a lot of other countries are having problems, so we must be doing something right. [*Laughter*]

Major Garrett [CBS News].

Iran/Europe-U.S. Counterterrorism Cooperation/Muslim Communities in the U.S. and Europe/Former National Security Agency Contractor Edward J. Snowden/U.S. Signals Intelligence and Electronic Surveillance Programs

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Good afternoon, Mr. Prime Minister. Good afternoon to you, sir.

Questions for all—for both of you. I want to make sure we heard what you were trying to say. You clearly are directing a message to Congress in the context of Iranian negotiations. Were you also sending a message—both of you—to Iran that if the sanctions talks fail, that war footing is the next most likely alternative for this country and those who are allied with us in this common pursuit?

And atrocities in Paris, raids and threats either in Belgium and Netherlands, I'd like to ask you both: Do you believe Europe is at a turning point now in its recognition of what its threats are and its own mobilization in terms of new laws, security footing, larger budgets? And you both talked about cybersecurity. There is a crucial issue for both countries: backdoors in encryption to protect people and also privacy. I'd like your comments on that. Thank you.

President Obama. I am not—repeat, not—suggesting that we are in immediate war footing should negotiations with Iran fail. But as David put it very simply: If in fact our view is that we have to prevent Iran from getting a nuclear weapon, then we have to recognize the possibility that should diplomacy fail, we have to look at other options to achieve that goal.

And if you listen sometimes to the rhetoric surrounding this issue, I think there is sometimes the view that this regime cannot be trusted; that, effectively, negotiations with Iran are pointless. And since these claims are being made by individuals who see Iran as a mortal threat and want as badly as we do to prevent them from getting a nuclear weapon, the question then becomes, well, what other alternatives exactly are available?

That is part of what we have to consider as to why it's so important for us to pursue every possible avenue to see if we can get a deal. Now, it's got to be good deal, not a bad deal. I've already shown myself willing to walk away from a bad deal. And the P5-plus-1 walked away with us. And so nobody is interested in some document that undermines our sanctions and gives Iran the possibility of, whether covertly or gradually, building up its nuclear weapons capacity. We're not going to allow that. And anything that we do, any deal that we arrive at—if we were to arrive at one—would be subject to scrutiny across the board, not just by Members of Congress, but more importantly, by people who actually know how the technical aspects of nuclear programs can advance and how we can effectively verify in the most

rigorous way possible that the terms of the deal are being met.

So the bottom line is this: We may not get there, but we have a chance to resolve the nuclear issue peacefully. And I should point out also, by the way, that if—even if we get a nuclear deal and we are assured that Iran doesn't possess nuclear weapons, we've still got a whole bunch of problems with Iran on state-sponsored terrorism, their rhetoric towards Israel, their financing of Hizballah. We've got differences with respect to Syria. It's not as if suddenly we've got a great relationship with Iran. It solves one particular problem that is urgent, and it solves it better than the other alternatives that might present themselves.

So I—my main message to Congress at this point is, just hold your fire. Nobody around the world, least of all the Iranians, doubt my ability to get some additional sanctions passed should these negotiations fail. That's not a hard vote for me to get through Congress. And so the notion that we need to have additional sanctions, or even the possibility of sanctions, hanging over their head to force them to a better deal, I think the Iranians know that that is certainly in our back pocket if the negotiations fail.

With respect to violent extremism, my impression is that Europe has consistently taken this seriously. During the course of my Presidency, we have worked collaboratively and with great urgency and a recognition that not only do you have foreigners who may be trying to hatch plots in Europe, but that, given large immigrant populations, it's important to reach out to and work with local communities and to have a very effective intelligence and counterterrorism cooperation between countries and between the United States and Europe.

There's no doubt that the most recent events has amplified those concerns. I think one of the things that I've learned over the last 6 years is that there's always more that we can do. We can always do it better. We learn from mistakes. Each incident that occurs teaches our professionals how we might be able to prevent these the next time.

And I'm confident that the very strong cooperation that already exists with Europe will get that much better in the months and years to come.

Q. But do you believe that Europe has been as sensitized as the United States and Great Britain has—[*inaudible*]—laws, surveillance?

President Obama. Here's where I actually think that Europe has some particular challenges, and I said this to David. The United States has one big advantage in this whole process, and it's not that our law enforcement or our intelligence services, et cetera, are so much better, although ours are very, very good, and I think Europeans would recognize that we've got capabilities others don't have. Our biggest advantage, Major, is that our Muslim populations, they feel themselves to be Americans. And there is this incredible process of immigration and assimilation that is part of our tradition that is probably our greatest strength. Now, it doesn't mean that we aren't subject to the kinds of tragedies that we saw at the Boston Marathon. But that, I think, has been helpful.

There are parts of Europe in which that's not the case, and that's probably the greatest danger that Europe faces, which is why, as they respond, as they work with us to respond to these circumstances, it's important for Europe not to simply respond with a hammer and law enforcement and military approaches to these problems, but there also has to be a recognition that the stronger the ties of a North African—or a Frenchman of North African descent to French values, French Republic, a sense of opportunity—that's going to be as important, if not more important, in over time solving this problem. And I think there's a recognition of that across Europe, and it's important that we don't lose that.

The last point I'll make, and then I'll turn it over to David, is with respect to the issue of intelligence gathering, signal intelligence, encryptions: This is a that we have been working on since I've been President. Obviously, it was amplified when Mr. Snowden did what he did. It's gone off the pages of—the front pages of the news, but we haven't stopped working on it. And we've been in dialogue with companies and have systematically worked through ways

in which we can meet legitimate privacy concerns, but also meet the very real concerns that David has identified and my FBI Director, Jim Comey, identified.

Social media and the Internet is the primary way in which these terrorist organizations are communicating. Now, that's no different than anybody else, but they're good at it. And when we have the ability to track that in a way that is legal, conforms with due process, rule of law, and presents oversight, then that's a capability that we have to preserve.

And the biggest damage that was done as a consequence of the Snowden disclosures was I think, in some cases, a complete undermining of trust. Some would say that was justified. I would argue that although there are some legitimate concerns there, overall, the United States Government and, from what I've seen, the British Government, have operated in a scrupulous and lawful way to try to balance these security and privacy concerns. And we can do better, and that's what we're doing.

But we're still going to have to find ways to make sure that if an Al Qaida affiliate is operating in Great Britain or in the United States, that we can try to prevent real tragedy. And I think the companies want to see that as well. They're patriots. They have families that they want to see protected. We just have to work through, in many cases, what are technical issues. So it's not so much that there's a difference in intent, but how to square the circle on these issues is difficult. And we're working with partners like Great Britain, but—and the United Kingdom, but we're also going to be in dialogue with the companies to try to make that work.

Prime Minister Cameron. On the Iranian issue, I won't add much to what the President said. I'd just make this point: that I don't think you can characterize it as, if there's a deal then the pressure is off Iran, and if there isn't a deal, new pressure has to be applied to Iran. I mean, even if there is a deal, the key to that deal will be transparency and verification and making sure that this country isn't developing a nuclear weapon. And that will mean repeated pressure, even after a deal is done. I think that's very important.

And I would absolutely back up what Barack says about recognizing that in so many other ways, we have some major disagreements with what the Iranians have been doing. I mean, Britain has suffered particularly from the appalling way that our Embassy and our staff were treated in that country. So we are—we approach this with a huge amount of skepticism and concern. But the goal of an Iran without a nuclear weapon makes these talks worthwhile.

On the issue, has—your question, has—is this a turning point for Europe in terms of terrorism, I would argue that we turned some time ago. Maybe Britain, in particular, because of the appalling attacks that took place in 2005, but there have been attacks elsewhere in Europe. I mean, since I've been Prime Minister, there's probably been at least one major plot every year of quite a significant nature that we have managed to intercept, stop, and prevent. So the awareness of the scale of the challenge we face is absolutely there across Government, across Parliament, across the different political parties in the police and intelligence services.

I think there is an opportunity for countries in Europe, who perhaps up to now have been less affected, to work with them and make sure that we share knowledge and skills. Because when you say, have you—the turning point is making sure your legislation is up to date, making sure your police and security services have the capabilities they need, making sure you've got programs that can channel extremists away and deradicalize them, making sure that you're better integrating your communities. It means doing all of those things.

I very much agree with what Barack says about the importance of building strong and integrated societies. I made a speech about this at Munich a couple of years ago, saying that it had been a mistake in the past when some countries had treated different groups and different religious groups as sort of separate blocks rather than trying to build a strong, common home together. That is what we

should be doing, and that is what our policy is directed to.

And of course, you need to have—as I believe we are—a multiracial, multiethnic society of huge opportunity where in one generation or two generations, you can come to our country and you can be in the Cabinet, you can serve at the highest level in the Armed Forces, you can sit on the bench as a judge. I've got in my Cabinet someone just like that, who in two generations, his family has gone from arriving in Britain to sitting—that's vitally important, as is combating unemployment, combating poverty.

But here's, I think, the really determining point: You can have, tragically, people who have had all the advantages of integration, who have had all the economic opportunities that our countries can offer, who still get seduced by this poisonous, radical death cult of a narrative. We've seen, in recent weeks, people who have gone to fight in Syria and who may threaten us here back at home who have had every opportunity and every advantage in life in terms of integration. So let's never lose sight of the real enemy here, which is the poisonous narrative that's perverting Islam. That is what we have to focus on, recognizing that of course we help ourselves in this struggle if we create societies of genuine opportunity, if we create genuine integration between our communities. But let's never lose sight of the real—the heart of the matter.

As for the issue on the techniques necessary for our intelligence services to help keep us safe, all I would say—and the President and I had a good discussion about this earlier—I don't think either of us are trying to annunciate some new doctrine. The doctrine that I approach this——

Q. [*Inaudible*]

Prime Minister Cameron. What?

Q. We invite you to.

Prime Minister Cameron. Well, I'm sorry to disappoint you, but I take a very simple approach to this, which is, ever since we've been sending letters to each other or making telephone calls to each other or mobile phone calls to each other or indeed contacting each other on the Internet, it has been possible in both our countries, in extremists—in my country by a signed warrant by the Home Secretary—to potentially listen to a call between two terrorists to stop them in their activity. In your country, a judicial process. We've had our own—we're not asking for back doors. We have—we believe in very clear front doors through legal processes that should help to keep our countries safe.

And my only argument is that as technology develops, as the world moves on, we should try to avoid the safe havens that can otherwise be created for terrorists to talk to each other. That's the goal that I think is so important, because I'm in no doubt, as having been Prime Minister for 4½ years, having seen how our intelligence services work, I know that some of these plots that get prevented, the lives that get saved, there is a very real connection between that and the capabilities that our intelligence services, within the law, use to defend our people.

I think the final question is from Robert Moore from ITN.

U.S. Signals Intelligence and Electronic Surveillance Programs

Q. Thank you. Yes, it's Robert Moore with the British network, ITV News. Prime Minister, it's clear there is a sort of security alert underway at the moment around the Jewish community in Britain. Can I just be clear, is that based on specific intelligence? Should people be concerned about doing their daily activities this weekend? And do you regard a terrorist attack on British soil as almost inevitable?

And, Mr. President, you say there is a dialogue underway with the big American tech companies, but do you share the Prime Minister's view that the current threat environment is so severe that there does need to be a swing of the pendulum a little bit, maybe from privacy towards counterterrorism, and that this area of private, encrypted communications is a very dangerous one, potentially in terms of facilitating dialogue between terrorist groups?

Prime Minister Cameron. On the issue of the threat that we face, as I said, the level has

been set at severe. That is set by an independent, expert organization, so people can have full confidence that these things aren't ever done for any other motives than literally to look at the evidence that is there about terrorist threats and to set the level accordingly. When the level, as it is as the moment, is set at severe, that means that the authorities believe an attack is highly likely. If we believed it was imminent, then you would move to the next level, which is critical.

And we clearly do face a very real threat in our country. I mean, in recent months, as I was discussing with the President, we've had a number of potential attacks averted, for instance, on British police officers. So that is the threat picture. It's regularly reviewed, regularly updated, but it shouldn't be moved unless there is real evidence to do so.

In terms of the protection to the Jewish community and indeed other communities and indeed to police officers themselves, this is based on what has happened in France, on the whole picture that we see. And it is sensible, precautionary measures to make sure we do what we can to reassure those communities, communities who are all too aware of the threat that they face. And this is a bigger challenge for us.

I think one of the most moving sights in Paris was to see so many people holding up signs saying, *"Je suis flic"*—"I'm a cop"; *"Je suis juif"*—"I'm a Jew." And I thought that was incredibly moving, that people wanted to stand together with one community that had been singled out and singled out not because of anything other than the fact they were Jewish. So I think it's very important that we speak up and stand up for those communities and give them the protection that they deserve.

President Obama. Obviously, in the wake of Paris, our attention is heightened. But I have to tell you, over the last 6 years, threat streams are fairly constant. David deals with them every day, I deal with them every day. Our CT, our counterterrorism, professionals deal with them every day. So I don't think there's a situation in which, because things are so much more dangerous, the pendulum needs to swing. I think what we have to find is a consistent framework whereby our publics have confidence that their government can both protect them, but not abuse our capacity to operate in cyberspace. And because this is a whole new world, as David said, the laws that might have been designed for the traditional wiretap have to be updated.

How we do that needs to be debated, both here in the United States and in the U.K. I think we're getting better at it. I think we're striking the balance better. I think that the companies here in the United States at least recognize that they have a responsibility to the public, but also want to make sure that they're meeting their responsibilities to their customers that are using their products. And so the dialogue that we're engaged in is designed to make sure that all of us feel confident that if there is an actual threat out there, our law enforcement and our intelligence officers can identify that threat and track that threat at the same time that our governments are not going around phishing into whatever text you might be sending on your smartphone. And I think that's something that can be achieved.

There are going to be situations where there are hard cases. But for the most part, those who are worried about Big Brother sometimes obscure or deliberately ignore all the legal safeguards that have been put in place to assure people's privacy and to make sure that government is not abusing these powers. And on the other hand, there are times where law enforcement and those of us whose job it is to protect the public aren't thinking about those problems because we're trying to track and prevent a particular terrorist event from happening. And it's useful to have civil libertarians and others tapping us on the shoulder in the midst of this process and reminding us that there are values at stake as well. And I think that David and I welcome that kind of debate.

The technologies are evolving in ways that potentially make this trickier. If we get into a situation in which the technologies do not allow us at all to track somebody that we're confident is a terrorist, if we find evidence of a terrorist plot somewhere in the Middle East that

traces directly back to London or New York, we have specific information and we are confident that this individual or this network is about to activate a plot, and despite knowing that information, despite having a phone number, or despite having a social media address or e-mail address, that we can't penetrate that, that's a problem.

And so that's the kind of dialogue that we're having to have with these companies. Part of it is a legal issue, part of it is a technical question. But overall, I'm actually confident that we can balance these imperatives, and we shouldn't feel as if, because we've just seen such a horrific attack in Paris, that suddenly, everything should be going by the wayside. We have—unfortunately, this has been a constant backdrop and I think will continue to be for any Prime Minister or President for some time to come, and we've got to make sure that we don't overreact, but that we remain vigilant and are serious about our responsibilities there. All right?

Thank you very much, everybody. Appreciate it. Thank you.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 12:37 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, Prime Minister Cameron referred to Sens. John S. McCain III and Robert P. Corker, Jr.; President Hassan Rouhani of Iran; and Secretary of State for Culture, Media, and Sport Sajid Javid and Secretary of State for the Home Department Theresa May of the United Kingdom.

The President's Weekly Address
January 17, 2015

Hi, everybody. Every day, we get thousands of letters and e-mails at the White House from Americans across the country. And every night, I read 10 of them. They tell me about their hopes and their worries, their hardships and successes. They're the Americans I'm working for every day. And this year, several of these letterwriters will join me at the Capitol when I deliver my annual State of the Union Address on Tuesday night.

Carolyn Reed wrote to me from Colorado to tell me she was able to expand her business thanks to a loan from the Small Business Administration. Today, she and her husband own seven Silver Mine Sub Shops, and last year, they raised wages for all their hourly employees.

Victor Fugate, from Butler, Missouri, wrote to tell me that he was unemployed for a while a few years ago, but today, he's earned his degree and found a full-time job. Victor said that he and his wife were able to afford their student loans because our country offered millions of Americans the chance to cap their monthly payments as a percentage of their income. And because of the Affordable Care Act, they now have the security and peace of mind of affordable health insurance.

While serving in Afghanistan, Jason Gibson was gravely wounded. He lost both his legs. When I first met him in the hospital, he was just beginning his long, difficult road to recovery. But last year, Sergeant Gibson wrote to tell me that with the help of our extraordinary doctors and nurses, he's making extraordinary progress. He just moved into a new home, and he and his wife just had a baby girl.

Stories like these give us reason to start the new year with confidence. Two thousand fourteen was the fastest year for job growth since the 1990s. Unemployment fell faster than any year since 1984. Our combat mission in Afghanistan has come to a responsible end, and more of our heroes are coming home. America's resurgence is real.

Our job now is to make sure that every American feels that they're a part of our country's comeback. That's what I'll focus on in my State of the Union: how to build on our momentum, with rising wages, growing incomes, and a stronger middle class. And I'll call on this new Congress to join me in putting aside the political games and finding areas where we agree so we can deliver for the American people.

The last 6 years have demanded resilience and sacrifice from all of us. All of us have a right to be proud of the progress America has made. And I hope you'll tune in on Tuesday to hear about the steps we can take to build on this progress and to seize this moment together.

Thanks, everybody, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 11:35 a.m. on January 15 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast on January 17. In the address, the President referred to David Johnson, husband of Carolyn Reed; Victor L. Fugate, Jr., service coordinator, Missouri Department of Mental Health's Casco Area Workshop, Inc., and his wife Tifany; and Kara Gibson, wife of S. Sgt. Jason W. Gibson, USA, and their daughter Quinn. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 16, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on January 17.

Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union
January 20, 2015

The President. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Vice President, Members of Congress, my fellow Americans: We are 15 years into this new century. Fifteen years that dawned with terror touching our shores, that unfolded with a new generation fighting two long and costly wars, that saw a vicious recession spread across our Nation and the world. It has been and still is a hard time for many.

But tonight we turn the page. Tonight, after a breakthrough year for America, our economy is growing and creating jobs at the fastest pace since 1999. Our unemployment rate is now lower than it was before the financial crisis. More of our kids are graduating than ever before. More of our people are insured than ever before. And we are as free from the grip of foreign oil as we've been in almost 30 years.

Tonight, for the first time since 9/11, our combat mission in Afghanistan is over. Six years ago, nearly 180,000 American troops served in Iraq and Afghanistan. Today, fewer than 15,000 remain. And we salute the courage and sacrifice of every man and woman in this 9/11 generation who has served to keep us safe. We are humbled and grateful for your service.

America, for all that we have endured, for all the grit and hard work required to come back, for all the tasks that lie ahead, know this: The shadow of crisis has passed, and the state of the Union is strong.

At this moment—with a growing economy, shrinking deficits, bustling industry, booming energy production—we have risen from recession freer to write our own future than any other nation on Earth. It's now up to us to choose who we want to be over the next 15 years and for decades to come.

Will we accept an economy where only a few of us do spectacularly well? Or will we commit ourselves to an economy that generates rising incomes and chances for everyone who makes the effort?

Will we approach the world fearful and reactive, dragged into costly conflicts that strain our military and set back our standing? Or will we lead wisely, using all elements of our power to defeat new threats and protect our planet?

Will we allow ourselves to be sorted into factions and turned against one another? Or will we recapture the sense of common purpose that has always propelled America forward?

In 2 weeks, I will send this Congress a budget filled with ideas that are practical, not partisan. And in the months ahead, I'll crisscross the country making a case for those ideas. So tonight I want to focus less on a checklist of proposals and focus more on the values at stake in the choices before us.

It begins with our economy. Seven years ago, Rebekah and Ben Erler of Minneapolis were newlyweds. [*Laughter*] She waited tables. He worked construction. Their first child Jack was on the way. They were young and in love in America. And it doesn't get much better than that. "If only we had known," Rebekah

wrote to me last spring, "what was about to happen to the housing and construction market."

As the crisis worsened, Ben's business dried up, so he took what jobs he could find, even if they kept him on the road for long stretches of time. Rebekah took out student loans and enrolled in community college and retrained for a new career. They sacrificed for each other. And slowly, it paid off. They bought their first home. They had a second son, Henry. Rebekah got a better job and then a raise. Ben is back in construction and home for dinner every night.

"It is amazing," Rebekah wrote, "what you can bounce back from when you have to. . . . We are a strong, tight-knit family who has made it through some very, very hard times." We are a strong, tight-knit family who has made it through some very, very hard times.

America, Rebekah and Ben's story is our story. They represent the millions who have worked hard and scrimped and sacrificed and retooled. You are the reason that I ran for this office. You are the people I was thinking of 6 years ago today, in the darkest months of the crisis, when I stood on the steps of this Capitol and promised we would rebuild our economy on a new foundation. And it has been your resilience, your effort that has made it possible for our country to emerge stronger.

We believed we could reverse the tide of outsourcing and draw new jobs to our shores. And over the past 5 years, our businesses have created more than 11 million new jobs.

We believed we could reduce our dependence on foreign oil and protect our planet. And today, America is number one in oil and gas. America is number one in wind power. Every 3 weeks, we bring online as much solar power as we did in all of 2008. And thanks to lower gas prices and higher fuel standards, the typical family this year should save about $750 at the pump.

We believed we could prepare our kids for a more competitive world. And today, our younger students have earned the highest math and reading scores on record. Our high school graduation rate has hit an alltime high. More Americans finish college than ever before.

We believed that sensible regulations could prevent another crisis, shield families from ruin, and encourage fair competition. Today, we have new tools to stop taxpayer-funded bailouts and a new consumer watchdog to protect us from predatory lending and abusive credit card practices. And in the past year alone, about 10 million uninsured Americans finally gained the security of health coverage.

At every step, we were told our goals were misguided or too ambitious, that we would crush jobs and explode deficits. Instead, we've seen the fastest economic growth in over a decade, our deficits cut by two-thirds, a stock market that has doubled, and health care inflation at its lowest rate in 50 years. This is good news, people. [*Laughter*]

So the verdict is clear. Middle class economics works. Expanding opportunity works. And these policies will continue to work as long as politics don't get in the way. We can't slow down businesses or put our economy at risk with Government shutdowns or fiscal showdowns. We can't put the security of families at risk by taking away their health insurance or unraveling the new rules on Wall Street or refighting past battles on immigration when we've got to fix a broken system. And if a bill comes to my desk that tries to do any of these things, I will veto it. It will have earned my veto.

Today, thanks to a growing economy, the recovery is touching more and more lives. Wages are finally starting to rise again. We know that more small-business owners plan to raise their employees' pay than at any time since 2007. But here's the thing: Those of us here tonight, we need to set our sights higher than just making sure Government doesn't screw things up—[*laughter*]—that Government doesn't halt the progress we're making. We need to do more than just do no harm. Tonight, together, let's do more to restore the link between hard work and growing opportunity for every American.

Because families like Rebekah's still need our help. She and Ben are working as hard as ever, but they've had to forego vacations and a

new car so that they can pay off student loans and save for retirement. Friday night pizza, that's a big splurge. Basic childcare for Jack and Henry costs more than their mortgage and almost as much as a year at the University of Minnesota. Like millions of hard-working Americans, Rebekah isn't asking for a handout, but she is asking that we look for more ways to help families get ahead.

And in fact, at every moment of economic change throughout our history, this country has taken bold action to adapt to new circumstances and to make sure everyone gets a fair shot. We set up worker protections, Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid to protect ourselves from the harshest adversity. We gave our citizens schools and colleges, infrastructure and the Internet, tools they needed to go as far as their efforts and their dreams will take them.

That's what middle class economics is: the idea that this country does best when everyone gets their fair shot, everyone does their fair share, everyone plays by the same set of rules. We don't just want everyone to share in America's success, we want everyone to contribute to our success.

So what does middle class economics require in our time? First, middle class economics means helping working families feel more secure in a world of constant change. That means helping folks afford childcare, college, health care, a home, retirement. And my budget will address each of these issues, lowering the taxes of working families and putting thousands of dollars back into their pockets each year.

Here's one example. During World War II, when men like my grandfather went off to war, having women like my grandmother in the workforce was a national security priority, so this country provided universal childcare. In today's economy, when having both parents in the workforce is an economic necessity for many families, we need affordable, high-quality childcare more than ever.

It's not a nice-to-have, it's a must-have. So it's time we stop treating childcare as a side issue, or as a women's issue, and treat it like the national economic priority that it is for all of us. And that's why my plan will make quality childcare more available and more affordable for every middle class and low-income family with young children in America, by creating more slots and a new tax cut of up to $3,000 per child, per year.

Here's another example. Today, we are the only advanced country on Earth that doesn't guarantee paid sick leave or paid maternity leave to our workers. Forty-three million workers have no paid sick leave—43 million. Think about that. And that forces too many parents to make the gut-wrenching choice between a paycheck and a sick kid at home. So I'll be taking new action to help States adopt paid leave laws of their own. And since paid sick leave won where it was on the ballot last November, let's put it to a vote right here in Washington. Send me a bill that gives every worker in America the opportunity to earn 7 days of paid sick leave. It's the right thing to do. [*Applause*] It's the right thing to do.

Of course, nothing helps families make ends meet like higher wages. That's why this Congress still needs to pass a law that makes sure a woman is paid the same as a man for doing the same work. I mean, it's 2015. [*Laughter*] It's time. We still need to make sure employees get the overtime they've earned. And to everyone in this Congress who still refuses to raise the minimum wage, I say this: If you truly believe you could work full time and support a family on less than $15,000 a year, try it. If not, vote to give millions of the hardest working people in America a raise.

Now, these ideas won't make everybody rich, won't relieve every hardship. That's not the job of government. To give working families a fair shot, we still need more employers to see beyond next quarter's earnings and recognize that investing in their workforce is in their company's long-term interest. We still need laws that strengthen rather than weaken unions, and give American workers a voice.

But you know, things like childcare and sick leave and equal pay, things like lower mortgage premiums and a higher minimum wage—these ideas will make a meaningful difference in the

lives of millions of families. That's a fact. And that's what all of us, Republicans and Democrats alike, were sent here to do.

Now, second, to make sure folks keep earning higher wages down the road, we have to do more to help Americans upgrade their skills. America thrived in the 20th century because we made high school free, sent a generation of GIs to college, trained the best workforce in the world. We were ahead of the curve. But other countries caught on. And in a 21st-century economy that rewards knowledge like never before, we need to up our game. We need to do more.

By the end of this decade, two in three job openings will require some higher education—two in three. And yet we still live in a country where too many bright, striving Americans are priced out of the education they need. It's not fair to them, and it's sure not smart for our future. And that's why I'm sending this Congress a bold new plan to lower the cost of community college to zero.

Keep in mind, 40 percent of our college students choose community college. Some are young and starting out. Some are older and looking for a better job. Some are veterans and single parents trying to transition back into the job market. Whoever you are, this plan is your chance to graduate ready for the new economy without a load of debt. Understand, you've got to earn it. You've got to keep your grades up and graduate on time.

Tennessee, a State with Republican leadership, and Chicago, a city with Democratic leadership, are showing that free community college is possible. I want to spread that idea all across America so that 2 years of college becomes as free and universal in America as high school is today. Let's stay ahead of the curve. And I want to work with this Congress to make sure those already burdened with student loans can reduce their monthly payments so that student debt doesn't derail anyone's dreams.

Thanks to Vice President Biden's great work to update our job training system, we're connecting community colleges with local employers to train workers to fill high-paying jobs like coding and nursing and robotics. Tonight I'm also asking more businesses to follow the lead of companies like CVS and UPS and offer more educational benefits and paid apprenticeships, opportunities that give workers the chance to earn higher paying jobs even if they don't have a higher education.

And as a new generation of veterans comes home, we owe them every opportunity to live the American Dream they helped defend. Already, we've made strides towards ensuring that every veteran has access to the highest quality care. We're slashing the backlog that had too many veterans waiting years to get the benefits they need. And we're making it easier for vets to translate their training and experience into civilian jobs. And Joining Forces, the national campaign launched by Michelle and Jill Biden—[*applause*]—thank you, Michelle; thank you, Jill—has helped nearly 700,000 veterans and military spouses get a new job. So to every CEO in America, let me repeat: If you want somebody who's going to get the job done and done right, hire a veteran.

Finally, as we better train our workers, we need the new economy to keep churning out high-wage jobs for our workers to fill. Since 2010, America has put more people back to work than Europe, Japan, and all advanced economies combined.

Our manufacturers have added almost 800,000 new jobs. Some of our bedrock sectors, like our auto industry, are booming. But there are also millions of Americans who work in jobs that didn't even exist 10 or 20 years ago, jobs at companies like Google and eBay and Tesla.

So no one knows for certain which industries will generate the jobs of the future. But we do know we want them here in America. We know that. And that's why the third part of middle class economics is all about building the most competitive economy anywhere, the place where businesses want to locate and hire.

Twenty-first century businesses need 21st-century infrastructure: modern ports and stronger bridges, faster trains and the fastest Internet. Democrats and Republicans used to agree on this. So let's set our sights higher than a single oil pipeline. Let's pass a bipartisan

infrastructure plan that could create more than 30 times as many jobs per year and make this country stronger for decades to come. Let's do it. Let's get it done. [*Applause*] Let's get it done.

Twenty-first century businesses, including small businesses, need to sell more American products overseas. Today, our businesses export more than ever, and exporters tend to pay their workers higher wages. But as we speak, China wants to write the rules for the world's fastest growing region. That would put our workers and our businesses at a disadvantage. Why would we let that happen? We should write those rules. We should level the playing field. And that's why I'm asking both parties to give me trade promotion authority to protect American workers, with strong new trade deals from Asia to Europe that aren't just free, but are also fair. It's the right thing to do.

Look, I'm the first one to admit that past trade deals haven't always lived up to the hype, and that's why we've gone after countries that break the rules at our expense. But 95 percent of the world's customers live outside our borders. We can't close ourselves off from those opportunities. More than half of manufacturing executives have said they're actively looking to bring jobs back from China. So let's give them one more reason to get it done.

Twenty-first century businesses will rely on American science and technology, research and development. I want the country that eliminated polio and mapped the human genome to lead a new era of medicine, one that delivers the right treatment at the right time.

In some patients with cystic fibrosis, this approach has reversed a disease once thought unstoppable. So tonight I'm launching a new precision medicine initiative to bring us closer to curing diseases like cancer and diabetes and to give all of us access to the personalized information we need to keep ourselves and our families healthier. We can do this.

I intend to protect a free and open Internet, extend its reach to every classroom and every community and help folks build the fastest networks so that the next generation of digital innovators and entrepreneurs have the platform to keep reshaping our world.

I want Americans to win the race for the kinds of discoveries that unleash new jobs: converting sunlight into liquid fuel; creating revolutionary prosthetics so that a veteran who gave his arms for his country can play catch with his kids again; pushing out into the solar system not just to visit, but to stay. Last month, we launched a new spacecraft as part of a reenergized space program that will send American astronauts to Mars. And in 2 months, to prepare us for those missions, Scott Kelly will begin a year-long stay in space. So good luck, Captain. Make sure to Instagram it. We're proud of you.

Now, the truth is, when it comes to issues like infrastructure and basic research, I know there's bipartisan support in this Chamber. Members of both parties have told me so. Where we too often run onto the rocks is how to pay for these investments. As Americans, we don't mind paying our fair share of taxes as long as everybody else does too. But for far too long, lobbyists have rigged the Tax Code with loopholes that let some corporations pay nothing while others pay full freight. They've riddled it with giveaways that the super-rich don't need, while denying a break to middle class families who do.

This year, we have an opportunity to change that. Let's close loopholes so we stop rewarding companies that keep profits abroad and reward those that invest here in America. Let's use those savings to rebuild our infrastructure and to make it more attractive for companies to bring jobs home. Let's simplify the system and let a small-business owner file based on her actual bank statement, instead of the number of accountants she can afford. And let's close the loopholes that lead to inequality by allowing the top 1 percent to avoid paying taxes on their accumulated wealth. We can use that money to help more families pay for childcare and send their kids to college. We need a Tax Code that truly helps working Americans trying to get a leg up in the new economy, and we can achieve that together. [*Applause*] We can achieve it together.

Helping hard-working families make ends meet, giving them the tools they need for good-paying jobs in this new economy, maintaining the conditions of growth and competitiveness—this is where America needs to go. I believe it's where the American people want to go. It will make our economy stronger a year from now, 15 years from now, and deep into the century ahead.

Of course, if there's one thing this new century has taught us, it's that we cannot separate our work here at home from challenges beyond our shores. My first duty as Commander in Chief is to defend the United States of America. In doing so, the question is not whether America leads in the world, but how. When we make rash decisions, reacting to the headlines instead of using our heads, when the first response to a challenge is to send in our military, then we risk getting drawn into unnecessary conflicts and neglect the broader strategy we need for a safer, more prosperous world. That's what our enemies want us to do.

I believe in a smarter kind of American leadership. We lead best when we combine military power with strong diplomacy, when we leverage our power with coalition building, when we don't let our fears blind us to the opportunities that this new century presents. That's exactly what we're doing right now. And around the globe, it is making a difference.

First, we stand united with people around the world who have been targeted by terrorists, from a school in Pakistan to the streets of Paris. We will continue to hunt down terrorists and dismantle their networks, and we reserve the right to act unilaterally, as we have done relentlessly since I took office, to take out terrorists who pose a direct threat to us and our allies.

At the same time, we've learned some costly lessons over the last 13 years. Instead of Americans patrolling the valleys of Afghanistan, we've trained their security forces, who have now taken the lead, and we've honored our troops' sacrifice by supporting that country's first democratic transition. Instead of sending large ground forces overseas, we're partnering with nations from South Asia to North Africa to deny safe haven to terrorists who threaten America.

In Iraq and Syria, American leadership—including our military power—is stopping ISIL's advance. Instead of getting dragged into another ground war in the Middle East, we are leading a broad coalition, including Arab nations, to degrade and ultimately destroy this terrorist group. We're also supporting a moderate opposition in Syria that can help us in this effort and assisting people everywhere who stand up to the bankrupt ideology of violent extremism.

Now, this effort will take time. It will require focus. But we will succeed. And tonight I call on this Congress to show the world that we are united in this mission by passing a resolution to authorize the use of force against ISIL. We need that authority.

Second, we're demonstrating the power of American strength and diplomacy. We're upholding the principle that bigger nations can't bully the small, by opposing Russian aggression and supporting Ukraine's democracy and reassuring our NATO allies.

Last year, as we were doing the hard work of imposing sanctions along with our allies, as we were reinforcing our presence with frontline states, Mr. Putin's aggression, it was suggested, was a masterful display of strategy and strength. That's what I heard from some folks. [*Laughter*] Well, today, it is America that stands strong and united with our allies, while Russia is isolated with its economy in tatters. That's how America leads: not with bluster, but with persistent, steady resolve.

In Cuba, we are ending a policy that was long past its expiration date. When what you're doing doesn't work for 50 years, it's time to try something new. [*Laughter*] And our shift in Cuba policy has the potential to end a legacy of mistrust in our hemisphere. It removes a phony excuse for restrictions in Cuba. It stands up for democratic values and extends the hand of friendship to the Cuban people. And this year, Congress should begin the work of ending the embargo.

As His Holiness Pope Francis has said, diplomacy is the work of "small steps." And these small steps have added up to new hope for the

future in Cuba. And after years in prison, we are overjoyed that Alan Gross is back where he belongs. Welcome home, Alan. We're glad you're here.

Our diplomacy is at work with respect to Iran, where, for the first time in a decade, we've halted the progress of its nuclear program and reduced its stockpile of nuclear material. Between now and this spring, we have a chance to negotiate a comprehensive agreement that prevents a nuclear-armed Iran, secures America and our allies, including Israel, while avoiding yet another Middle East conflict. There are no guarantees that negotiations will succeed, and I keep all options on the table to prevent a nuclear Iran.

But new sanctions passed by this Congress, at this moment in time, will all but guarantee that diplomacy fails: alienating America from its allies, making it harder to maintain sanctions, and ensuring that Iran starts up its nuclear program again. It doesn't make sense. And that's why I will veto any new sanctions bill that threatens to undo this progress. The American people expect us only to go to war as a last resort, and I intend to stay true to that wisdom.

Third, we're looking beyond the issues that have consumed us in the past to shape the coming century. No foreign nation, no hacker, should be able to shut down our networks, steal our trade secrets, or invade the privacy of American families, especially our kids. So we're making sure our Government integrates intelligence to combat cyber threats, just as we have done to combat terrorism.

And tonight I urge this Congress to finally pass the legislation we need to better meet the evolving threat of cyber attacks, combat identity theft, and protect our children's information. That should be a bipartisan effort. If we don't act, we'll leave our Nation and our economy vulnerable. If we do, we can continue to protect the technologies that have unleashed untold opportunities for people around the globe.

In West Africa, our troops, our scientists, our doctors, our nurses, our health care workers are rolling back Ebola, saving countless lives and stopping the spread of disease. I could not be prouder of them, and I thank this Congress for your bipartisan support of their efforts. But the job is not yet done, and the world needs to use this lesson to build a more effective global effort to prevent the spread of future pandemics, invest in smart development, and eradicate extreme poverty.

In the Asia-Pacific, we are modernizing alliances while making sure that other nations play by the rules: in how they trade, how they resolve maritime disputes, how they participate in meeting common international challenges like nonproliferation and disaster relief. And no challenge—no challenge—poses a greater threat to future generations than climate change.

Two thousand fourteen was the planet's warmest year on record. Now, 1 year doesn't make a trend, but this does: 14 of the 15 warmest years on record have all fallen in the first 15 years of this century.

Now, I've heard some folks try to dodge the evidence by saying they're not scientists, that we don't have enough information to act. Well, I'm not a scientist, either. But you know what, I know a lot of really good scientists—[*laughter*]—at NASA and at NOAA and at our major universities. And the best scientists in the world are all telling us that our activities are changing the climate, and if we don't act forcefully, we'll continue to see rising oceans, longer, hotter heat waves, dangerous droughts and floods, and massive disruptions that can trigger greater migration and conflict and hunger around the globe. The Pentagon says that climate change poses immediate risks to our national security. We should act like it.

And that's why, over the past 6 years, we've done more than ever to combat climate change, from the way we produce energy to the way we use it. That's why we've set aside more public lands and waters than any administration in history. And that's why I will not let this Congress endanger the health of our children by turning back the clock on our efforts. I am determined to make sure that American leadership drives international action.

In Beijing, we made a historic announcement: The United States will double the pace

at which we cut carbon pollution. And China committed, for the first time, to limiting their emissions. And because the world's two largest economies came together, other nations are now stepping up and offering hope that this year the world will finally reach an agreement to protect the one planet we've got.

And there's one last pillar of our leadership, and that's the example of our values. As Americans, we respect human dignity, even when we're threatened, which is why I have prohibited torture and worked to make sure our use of new technology like drones is properly constrained. It's why we speak out against the deplorable anti-Semitism that has resurfaced in certain parts of the world. It's why we continue to reject offensive stereotypes of Muslims, the vast majority of whom share our commitment to peace. That's why we defend free speech and advocate for political prisoners and condemn the persecution of women or religious minorities or people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. We do these things not only because they are the right thing to do, but because ultimately, they will make us safer.

As Americans, we have a profound commitment to justice. So it makes no sense to spend $3 million per prisoner to keep open a prison that the world condemns and terrorists use to recruit. Since I've been President, we've worked responsibly to cut the population of Gitmo in half. Now it is time to finish the job. And I will not relent in my determination to shut it down. It is not who we are. It's time to close Gitmo.

As Americans, we cherish our civil liberties, and we need to uphold that commitment if we want maximum cooperation from other countries and industry in our fight against terrorist networks. So while some have moved on from the debates over our surveillance programs, I have not. As promised, our intelligence agencies have worked hard, with the recommendations of privacy advocates, to increase transparency and build more safeguards against potential abuse. And next month, we'll issue a report on how we're keeping our promise to keep our country safe while strengthening privacy.

Looking to the future instead of the past, making sure we match our power with diplomacy and use force wisely, building coalitions to meet new challenges and opportunities, leading always with the example of our values—that's what makes us exceptional. That's what keeps us strong. That's why we have to keep striving to hold ourselves to the highest of standards: our own.

You know, just over a decade ago, I gave a speech in Boston where I said there wasn't a liberal America or a conservative America, a Black America or a White America, but a United States of America. I said this because I had seen it in my own life, in a nation that gave someone like me a chance; because I grew up in Hawaii, a melting pot of races and customs; because I made Illinois my home, a State of small towns, rich farmland, one of the world's great cities, a microcosm of the country where Democrats and Republicans and Independents, good people of every ethnicity and every faith, share certain bedrock values.

Over the past 6 years, the pundits have pointed out more than once that my Presidency hasn't delivered on this vision. How ironic, they say, that our politics seems more divided than ever. It's held up as proof not just of my own flaws—of which there are many—but also as proof that the vision itself is misguided, naive, that there are too many people in this town who actually benefit from partisanship and gridlock for us to ever do anything about it.

I know how tempting such cynicism may be. But I still think the cynics are wrong. I still believe that we are one people. I still believe that together, we can do great things, even when the odds are long.

I believe this because over and over in my 6 years in office, I have seen America at its best. I've seen the hopeful faces of young graduates from New York to California and our newest officers at West Point, Annapolis, Colorado Springs, New London. I've mourned with grieving families in Tucson and Newtown, in Boston, in West, Texas, and West Virginia. I've watched Americans beat back adversity from the Gulf Coast to the Great Plains, from Midwest assembly lines to the Mid-Atlantic

seaboard. I've seen something like gay marriage go from a wedge issue used to drive us apart to a story of freedom across our country, a civil right now legal in States that 7 in 10 Americans call home.

So I know the good and optimistic and bighearted generosity of the American people who every day live the idea that we are our brother's keeper and our sister's keeper. And I know they expect those of us who serve here to set a better example.

So the question for those of us here tonight is how we, all of us, can better reflect America's hopes. I've served in Congress with many of you. I know many of you well. There are a lot of good people here on both sides of the aisle. And many of you have told me that this isn't what you signed up for: arguing past each other on cable shows, the constant fundraising, always looking over your shoulder at how the base will react to every decision.

Imagine if we broke out of these tired old patterns. Imagine if we did something different. Understand, a better politics isn't one where Democrats abandon their agenda or Republicans simply embrace mine. A better politics is one where we appeal to each other's basic decency instead of our basest fears. A better politics is one where we debate without demonizing each other, where we talk issues and values and principles and facts rather than "gotcha" moments or trivial gaffes or fake controversies that have nothing to do with people's daily lives.

A politics—a better politics is one where we spend less time drowning in dark money for ads that pull us into the gutter and spend more time lifting young people up with a sense of purpose and possibility, asking them to join in the great mission of building America.

If we're going to have arguments, let's have arguments, but let's make them debates worthy of this body and worthy of this country. We still may not agree on a woman's right to choose, but surely, we can agree it's a good thing that teen pregnancies and abortions are nearing alltime lows and that every woman should have access to the health care that she needs.

Yes, passions still fly on immigration, but surely we can all see something of ourselves in the striving young student and agree that no one benefits when a hard-working mom is snatched from her child and that it's possible to shape a law that upholds our tradition as a nation of laws and a nation of immigrants. I've talked to Republicans and Democrats about that. That's something that we can share.

We may go at it in campaign season, but surely we can agree that the right to vote is sacred, that it's being denied to too many, and that on this 50th anniversary of the great march from Selma to Montgomery and the passage of the Voting Rights Act, we can come together, Democrats and Republicans, to make voting easier for every single American.

We may have different takes on the events of Ferguson and New York. But surely we can understand a father who fears his son can't walk home without being harassed. And surely we can understand the wife who won't rest until the police officer she married walks through the front door at the end of his shift. And surely we can agree that it's a good thing that for the first time in 40 years, the crime rate and the incarceration rate have come down together, and use that as a starting point for Democrats and Republicans, community leaders and law enforcement, to reform America's criminal justice system so that it protects and serves all of us.

That's a better politics. That's how we start rebuilding trust. That's how we move this country forward. That's what the American people want. And that's what they deserve.

I have no more campaigns to run.

[*At this point, some audience members applauded.*]

My only agenda—[*laughter*].

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]

The President. I know because I won both of them. [*Laughter*] My only agenda for the next 2 years is the same as the one I've had since the day I swore an oath on the steps of this Capitol: to do what I believe is best for America. If you share the broad vision I outlined tonight, I ask you to join me in the work at hand. If you dis-

agree with parts of it, I hope you'll at least work with me where you do agree. And I commit to every Republican here tonight that I will not only seek out your ideas, I will seek to work with you to make this country stronger.

Because I want this Chamber, I want this city to reflect the truth: that for all our blind spots and shortcomings, we are a people with the strength and generosity of spirit to bridge divides, to unite in common effort, to help our neighbors, whether down the street or on the other side of the world.

I want our actions to tell every child in every neighborhood, your life matters, and we are committed to improving your life chances, as committed as we are to working on behalf of our own kids. I want future generations to know that we are a people who see our differences as a great gift, that we're a people who value the dignity and worth of every citizen: man and woman, young and old, Black and White, Latino, Asian, immigrant, Native American, gay, straight, Americans with mental illness or physical disability. Everybody matters. I want them to grow up in a country that shows the world what we still know to be true: that we are still more than a collection of red States and blue States, that we are the United States of America.

I want them to grow up in a country where a young mom can sit down and write a letter to her President with a story that sums up these past 6 years: "It's amazing what you can bounce back from when you have to. . . . We are a strong, tight-knit family who's made it through some very, very hard times."

My fellow Americans, we too are a strong, tight-knit family. We too have made it through some hard times. Fifteen years into this new century, we have picked ourselves up, dusted ourselves off, and begun again the work of remaking America. We have laid a new foundation. A brighter future is ours to write. Let's begin this new chapter together, and let's start the work right now.

Thank you. God bless you. God bless this country we love. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:10 p.m. in the House Chamber of the U.S. Capitol. In his remarks, he referred to President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia; and former U.S. Agency for International Development contractor Alan P. Gross. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

Remarks at Boise State University in Boise, Idaho
January 21, 2015

The President. Hello, Boise State! Oh, it's good to be back! Can everybody please give Camille a big round of applause for that introduction? I love young people who are doing science. And I especially love seeing young women in sciences. And so we're very proud of what Camille is doing.

A couple other people I want to mention. Your mayor, Mayor Bieter, is here. Flew—where is he? Where is he? There he is. Flew back with me on Air Force One. And he didn't break anything. [*Laughter*] It was amazing though. When we were coming back, he was telling me the story about his grandfather, an immigrant from the Basque region, coming here and how he would herd sheep. And for 5 years, he would be up in the mountains and the hills, and then come down to town for, like, 2 months a year, and the rest of the time he was up there. And I figured, his dad was a pretty tough guy, because I'll bet it gets kind of cold up in the hills. [*Laughter*]

Another person I want to mention—this is somebody who I actually have known for a really long time. He was the Lieutenant Governor in Illinois, now is your outstanding president here at Boise State: President Kustra. Give him a big round of applause. There he is. It's good to see Illinoisans do something with their lives. [*Laughter*] We're proud of them.

Thanks to all the Broncos for having me. And thanks for the balmy weather. I thought it was going to be a little colder around here. [*Laughter*]

So last night I gave my State of the Union Address. And today I'm going to be shorter. It won't be too short, just a little shorter. [*Laughter*] And I focused last night on what we can do, together, to make sure middle class economics helps more Americans get ahead in the new economy. And I said that I'd take these ideas across the country. And I wanted my first stop to be right here in Boise, Idaho.

Now, there are a couple reasons for this. The first is because, last year, Michelle and I got a very polite letter from a young girl named Bella Williams, who is here today. Where's Bella? There she is right there. Wave, Bella. Bella is 13 now, but she was 12 at the time. So she wrote me a letter, and she said, "I know what you're thinking: Wow, what's it like in Boise, Idaho?" [*Laughter*] So she invited me to come visit. And she also invited me to learn how to ski or snowboard with her. Now, as somebody who was born in Hawaii, where there's not a lot of snow—let me put it this way—you do not want to see me ski. [*Laughter*] Or at least the Secret Service does not want to see me ski. [*Laughter*]

But what I do know about Boise is that it's beautiful. I know that because I've been here before. I campaigned here in 2008. It was really fun. And the truth is, because of the incredible work that was done here in Idaho, it helped us win the primary. And I might not be President if it weren't for the good people of Idaho. Of course, in the general election, I got whupped. [*Laughter*] I got whupped twice, in fact. But that's okay; I've got no hard feelings. [*Laughter*]

In fact, that's exactly why I came back. Because I ended my speech last night with something that I talked about in Boston just over a decade ago, and that is, there is not a liberal America or a conservative America, but a United States of America.

And today, I know it can seem like our politics are more divided than ever. And in places like Idaho, the only blue turf is on your field. And the pundits in Washington hold up these divisions in our existing politics and they show, well, this is proof that any kind of hopeful politics, that's just naive. But as I told you last night, I still believe what I said back then. I still believe that, as Americans, we have more in common than not.

I mean, we have an entire industry that's designed to sort us out. Right? Our media is all segmented now so that instead of just watching 3 stations, we've got 600. And everything is market segmented, and you got the conservative station and the liberal stations. So everybody is only listening to what they already agree with. And then, you've got political gerrymandering that sorts things out so that every district is either one thing or the other. And so there are a lot of institutional forces that make it seem like we have nothing in common.

One of the great things about being President is you travel all across the country, and I've seen too much of the good and generous and big-hearted optimism of people, young and old, folks like Bella. I've seen how, deep down, there's just a core decency and desire to make progress together among the American people. That's what I believe.

So I've got 2 years less—left in office, and I am not going to stop trying make—trying to make our politics work better. That's what you deserve. That's how we move the country forward. And, Idaho, we've got big things to do together. I may be in the fourth quarter of my Presidency, but here, at the home of the team with the most famous "Statue of Liberty" play in history, I don't need to remind you that big things happen late in the fourth quarter.

So here's where we're starting in 2015. Our economy is growing. Our businesses are creating jobs at the fastest pace since 1999. Our deficits have been cut by two-thirds. Our energy production is booming. Our troops are coming home. We have risen from recession better positioned, freer to write our own future than any other country on Earth.

But as I said last night, now we've got to choose what future we want. Are we going to accept an economy where only a few of us do spectacularly well?

Audience members. No!

The President. Or can we commit ourselves to an economy that generates rising incomes and opportunities for everybody who's willing to try hard?

For 6 years, we've been working to rebuild our economy on a new foundation. And what I want people to know is, thanks to your hard work and your resilience, America is coming back. And you'll recall, when we were in the midst of the recession, right after I came into office, there was some arguments about the steps we were taking. There were questions about whether we were doing the right thing. But we believed we could reverse the tide of outsourcing and draw new jobs back to America. And over the past 5 years, our businesses have created more than 11 million new jobs.

We believed that with smart energy policies, we could reduce our dependence on foreign oil and protect our planet. Today, America is number one in oil production and gas production and wind production. And every 3 weeks, we bring online as much solar power as we did in all of 2008. And meanwhile, thanks to lower gas prices and higher fuel standards, the average family this year should save about 750 bucks at the pump.

We believed we could do better when it came to educating our kids for a competitive world. And today, our younger students have earned the highest math and reading scores on record. Our high school graduation rate has hit an alltime high. More young people like folks right here at Boise State are finishing college than ever before.

We figured sensible regulations could encourage fair competition and shield families from ruin and prevent the kind of crises that we saw in 2007, 2008. And today, we have new tools to stop taxpayer-funded bailouts. And in the past year alone, about 10 million uninsured Americans finally gained the security of health coverage, including right here in Idaho.

Now, sometimes, you'd think folks have short memories, because at every step of the way, we were told that these goals were too misguided, or they were too ambitious, or they'd crush jobs, or they'd explode deficits, or they'd destroy the economy. You remember those, right? Every step we took, it's, oh, this is going to be terrible. And instead, we've seen the fastest economic growth in over a decade. And we've seen the deficits, as I said, go down by two-thirds. And people's 401(k)s are stronger now because the stock market has doubled. And health care inflation is at the lowest rate in 50 years. Lowest rate in 50 years.

Here in Boise, your unemployment rate has fallen below 4 percent, and that's almost two-thirds from its peak 5 years ago.

So the verdict is clear. The ruling on the field stands. [*Laughter*] Middle class economics works. Expanding opportunity works. These policies will keep on working, as long as politics in Washington doesn't get in the way of our progress. We can't suddenly put the security of families back at risk by taking away their health insurance. We can't risk another meltdown on Wall Street by unraveling the new rules on Wall Street. I'm going to stand between working families and any attempt to roll back that progress.

Because today, thanks to a growing economy, the recovery is touching more and more lives. Wages are finally starting to go up. More small-business owners plan to raise their employees' pay than at any time since 2007. So we need to keep on going. Let's do more to restore the link between hard work and opportunity for every single American. That's our job. [*Applause*] That's our job. Let's make sure all our people have the tools and the support that they need to go as far as their dreams and their effort will take them.

That's what middle class economics is: the idea that this country does best when everybody gets a fair shot and everybody is doing their fair share and everybody is playing by the same set of rules. We don't want to just make sure that everybody shares in America's success, we actually think that everybody can contribute to America's success. And when everybody is participating and given a shot, there's nothing we cannot do.

So here's what middle class economics requires in this new economy. Number one, it means helping working families feel more secure in a constantly changing economy. It

means helping folks afford childcare and college and paid leave at work and health care and retirement. And I'm sending Congress a plan that's going to help families with all of these issues, lowering the taxes of working families, putting thousands of dollars back into your pockets each year. Giving you some help.

Number two, middle class economics means that we're going to make sure that folks keep earning higher wages down the road, and that means we've got to do more to help Americans upgrade their skills. And that's what all of you are doing right here at Boise State. You heard Camille's story. She's a mechanical engineering major. She's a great example of why we're encouraging more women and more minorities to study in high-paying fields that traditionally they haven't always participated in: in math, in science, in engineering, in technology. Camille has done research for NASA. She's gotten real job experience with industry partners. She's the leader of your Microgravity Team. [*Laughter*] And by the way, she's a sophomore. So by the time she's done, she might have invented time travel by the time she's done here at Boise. [*Laughter*]

But the point is, I want every American to have the kinds of chances that Camille has. Because when we've got everybody on the field, that's when you win games. I mean, think about if we had as many young girls focused and aspiring to be scientists and astronauts and engineers. That's a whole slew of talent that we want to make sure is on the field.

And so we've been working to help more young people have access to and afford college, with grants and loans that go farther than before. And when I came into office, we took action to help millions of students cap payments on their loans at 10 percent of their income so that they could afford to, let's say, take a research job after graduation and not be overburdened by debt. That's why I want to work with Congress to make sure every student already burdened with loans can reduce your monthly payments by refinancing.

But there are a lot of Americans who don't always have the opportunity to study someplace like Boise State. They need something that's local; they need something that's more flexible. You've got older workers looking for a better job. Or you've got veterans coming back and trying to figure out how they can get into the civilian workforce. You've got parents who are trying to transition back into the job market, but they've got to work and pay the rent and look after their kids, but they still want to make something of themselves. So they can't always go full time at a 4-year institution. And that's why I'm sending Congress a bold, new plan to lower the cost of community college to zero to zero.

The idea is, in the new economy, we need to make 2 years of college as free and as universal in America as high school is today. Because that was part of our huge advantage back in the 20th century. We were the first out of the gate to democratize education and put in place public high schools. And so our workforce was better educated than any other country in the world. But the thing is, other countries caught up. They figured it out. They looked at America and said, why is America being so successful? Their workers are better educated. We were on the cutting edge then; now we've got to be pushing the boundaries for the 21st century.

And just like we pick up a tool to build something new, we can pick up a skill to do something new. And that's something that you're doing right here at Boise. Every year, you sponsor HackFort, which is, for those of you who are not aware, this is a tech festival that brings the community together to share knowledge and new skills with one another. And I know we've got some folks from some of Boise's dozen or so tech "meetups" here today.

Here at Boise State, innovation is a culture that you're building. And you're also partnering with companies to do two things: You help students graduate with skills that employers are looking for, and you help employees pick up the skills they need to advance on the job. So you're working together. And you're seeing progress, and it's contributing to the economic development of the city and the State, as well as being good for the students.

And that's why my administration is connecting community colleges with local employers to train workers to fill high-paying jobs like coding or robotics, as well as traditional fields like nursing. And today, we're partnering with business across the country to "Upskill America": to help workers of all ages earn a shot at better, higher paying jobs, even if they don't have a higher education. We want to recruit more companies to help provide apprenticeships and other pathways so that people can upgrade their skills. We've—we're all going to have to do that in this new economy. But it's hard to do it on your own, especially if you're already working and supporting a family.

Now, as we better train our workers, we need the new economy to keep churning out high-wage jobs for those workers to fill. And that's why the third part of middle class economics is about building the most competitive economy in the world. We want good jobs being created right here in the United States of America, not someplace else.

And we've got everything it takes to do it. Just to go back to Bella's question—"Wow, what's it like in Boise, Idaho?"—well, one of the answers is, you're the cutting edge of innovation.

I had a chance to tour your New Product Development lab, and I've got to say, this was not the stuff I was doing in college. [*Laughter*] So one group was showing me how they 3–D-printed a custom handle that a local student with developmental disabilities could access his locker independently, without anybody's help. But this whole 3–D printing concept was creating prototypes so that if you have a good idea, you don't have to have a huge amount of money. You can come and students and faculty are going to work with you to develop a prototype that you may then be able to sell as a product at much lower cost.

Another group is working with a local company, Rekluse, to manufacture parts for high-performance motorcycles. Now, that excites Vice President Biden. [*Laughter*] I might bring him with me the next time I come to Boise. Some of your faculty and students are working with next-generation materials like graphene, which is a material that's thinner than paper and stronger than steel. It's amazing.

And the work you do here is one of the reasons why Boise is one of our top cities for tech startups. And that means we shouldn't just be celebrating your work, we should be investing in it. We should make sure our businesses have everything they need to innovate, expand in this 21st-century economy: the research dollars that leads to new inventions, the manufacturers who can make those inventions here in America, the best infrastructure to ship products and the chance to sell those products in growing markets overseas, a free and open Internet that reaches every classroom and every community so this young generation of innovators and entrepreneurs can keep on remaking our world.

Now, those of you who were watching last night know that I made these arguments before Congress. Most of these are ideas that traditionally were bipartisan. I was talking to Bob. Bob was a Republican Lieutenant Governor, but I'm not sure he'd survive now in a primary. But—[*laughter*]. But the ideas I just talked about, those are things that traditionally all of us could agree to. I mean, after all, the State we come from, Illinois, that's the "Land of Lincoln," and Lincoln was the first Republican President. And he started land-grant colleges, and he built railroads and invested in the National Science Foundation. And he understood that this is what it takes for us to grow together.

But watching last night, some of you may have noticed, Republicans were not applauding for many of these ideas. [*Laughter*] They were kind of quiet. But when it comes to issues like infrastructure and research, I think, when you talk to them privately, when they're not on camera—[*laughter*]—they generally agree that it's important. Educating our young people, creating good jobs, being competitive—those things shouldn't be controversial. But where too often we run onto the rocks, where the debate starts getting difficult, is how do we pay for these investments? Because it requires dollars. I mean, the labs here and the infrastructure that we need, those things don't just pop up for free.

And the private sector, which is the heartbeat of our economy, it doesn't build roads; it doesn't create ports; it doesn't lay down all the Internet lines that—or the broadband lines that are required to reach remote communities. So we have to make some investments; we've got to figure out how to pay for it.

And as Americans, we don't mind paying our fair share of taxes, as long as everybody else does. Where we get frustrated is when we know that lobbyists have rigged the Tax Code with loopholes, so you've got some corporations paying nothing while others are paying full freight. You've got the super-rich getting giveaways they don't need and middle class families not getting the breaks that they do need.

So what I said last night to Congress is, we need to make these investments, we need to help families, we need to build middle class economics. And here's how we can pay for it. Let's close those loopholes. Let's stop rewarding companies that keep profits abroad; let's reward companies that are investing here in America.

Let's close the loopholes that let the top 1 or .1 or .01 percent avoid paying certain taxes and use that money to help more Americans pay for college and childcare. The idea is, let's have a Tax Code that truly helps working Americans—the vast majority of Americans—get a leg up in this new economy.

And that's what I believe in. That's what I believe in. I believe in helping hard-working families make ends meet. And I believe in giving all of us the tools we need so that if we work, hard we can get good-paying jobs in this new economy. And I believe in making sure that our businesses are strong and competitive and making the investments that are required.

That's where America needs to go. And I believe that's where Americans want America to go. And if we do these things, it will make our economy stronger, not just a year from now or 10 years from now, but deep into the next century.

Now, I know there are Republicans who disagree with my approach. I could see that from their body language yesterday. [*Laughter*] And if they do disagree with me, then I look forward to hearing from them how they want to pay for things like R&D and infrastructure that we need to grow. They should put forward some alternative proposals.

I want to hear specifically from them how they intend to help kids pay for college. It is perfectly fair for them to say, we've got a better way of meeting these national priorities. But if they do, then they've got to show us what those ideas are. And what you can't do is just pretend that things like childcare or student debt or infrastructure or basic research are not important. And you can't pretend there's nothing we can do to help middle class families get ahead. There's a lot we can do.

Some of the commentators last night said, well, that was a pretty good speech, but none of this can pass this Congress. But my job is to put forward what I think is best for America. The job of Congress, then, is to put forward alternative ideas, but they've got to be specific. It can't just be no. [*Laughter*] I just want—I'm happy to start a conversation. Tell me how we're going to do the things that need to be done. Tell me how we get to yes.

I want to get to yes on more young people being able to afford college. I want to get to yes on more research and development funding. I want to get to yes for first-class infrastructure to help our businesses succeed. I want to get to yes! But you've got to tell me, work with me here. Work with me! Come on! Don't just say no! You can't just say no.

Audience member. Si, se puede!

The President. Si, se puede! Yes, we can!

Look, we may disagree on politics sometimes. Not "may"—we often, all the time disagree. That's the nature of a democracy. But we don't have to be divided as a people. We're on the same team. When the football team divides up into offense and defense, they probably go at it pretty hard during practice, but they understand, well, we're part of the same team. We're supposed to be rooting for each other. If a quarterback controversy arises and there's a competition, I'm going to be fighting real hard to be—get that starting spot. But if I don't get it, I'm going to be rooting for the team.

Whoever we are—whether we are Republican or Democrat or Independent or young or

old or Black, White, gay, straight—we all share a common vision for our future. We want a better country for your generation and for your kids' generation. And I want this country to be the one that shows the world what we still know to be true: that we are not just a collection of red States and blue States, we are still the United States of America. That's what we're fighting for. That's what we're pushing for.

And if you agree with me, then join me, and let's get to work. We've got a lot of stuff to do in this new century.

Thank you. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:05 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Camille Eddy, student, Boise State University.

Statement on the Fifth Anniversary of the Supreme Court Decision in *Citizens United* v. *Federal Election Commission*
January 21, 2015

Our democracy works best when everyone's voice is heard and no one's voice is drowned out. But 5 years ago, a Supreme Court ruling allowed big companies—including foreign corporations—to spend unlimited amounts of money to influence our elections. The *Citizens United* decision was wrong, and it has caused real harm to our democracy. With each new campaign season, this dark money floods our airwaves with more and more political ads that pull our politics into the gutter. It's time to reverse this trend. Rather than bolster the power of lobbyists and special interests, Washington should lift up the voices of ordinary Americans and protect their democratic right to determine the direction of the country that we love.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Terrorists Who Threaten To Disrupt the Middle East Peace Process
January 21, 2015

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency declared with respect to foreign terrorists who threaten to disrupt the Middle East peace process is to continue in effect beyond January 23, 2015.

The crisis with respect to grave acts of violence committed by foreign terrorists who threaten to disrupt the Middle East peace process that led to the declaration of a national emergency on January 23, 1995, has not been resolved. Terrorist groups continue to engage in activities that have the purpose or effect of threatening the Middle East peace process and that are hostile to United States interests in the region. Such actions continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States. Therefore, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared with respect to foreign terrorists who threaten to disrupt the Middle East peace process and to maintain in force the sanctions against them to respond to this threat.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
January 21, 2015.

NOTE: The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks at the University of Kansas in Lawrence, Kansas
January 22, 2015

The President. Hello, Kansas! Rock Chalk! Can everybody give Alyssa a big round of applause for the great introduction? It is good to be at KU! I've got to admit, I took a moment to meet with Coach Self and the KU basketball team. I mean, we're here for other business, but while I was here—[*laughter*]—I thought I should talk to some basketball players. And it is January, so that means that the Jayhawks are at the top of the Big 12, hunting for your 11th straight conference title.

I want to thank your chancellor, Bernadette Gray-Little. I want to thank Mayor Amyx for having me. I recently heard from Bob Dole as well, who told me he's very proud of his Institute of Politics here. Any school of politics named for Bob Dole is one I'd be proud of too, because he is a great Kansan and a great American.

Now, it's good to be back in Kansas. I've got deep roots in Kansas. As you know, my mom was born in Wichita. Her mom grew up in Augusta. Her father was from El Dorado. So I'm a Kansas guy. [*Applause*] I'm a Kansas guy.

Now, that helped me in the caucus here in 2008. It didn't help me as much in the general election. [*Laughter*]

Audience member. We're sorry!

The President. Coach Self won 10 straight. I lost two straight here. [*Laughter*] But that's okay. Listen, I love you, and I might have won sections of Lawrence. That's possible. [*Laughter*] That's a possibility. [*Laughter*] But look, this is exactly why I've come back to Kansas today.

On Tuesday, I gave my State of the Union Address. And I just want you to know, today I will be shorter. [*Laughter*] But I want to begin where I finished on Tuesday, because I talked about in the State of the Union how, over a decade ago, in Boston at the Democratic Convention, I gave a speech where I said there is no liberal America or conservative America, there's a United States of America. We're all supposed to be on the same team.

And I know it can seem sometimes like our politics is more divided than ever, that in places like Kansas, the only blue stands for KU. [*Laughter*] And so because of those divisions the pundits in Washington, they hold this up as proof that any vision of a more hopeful politics must be naive or misguided. But as I pointed out, I still believe what I said back then. I still believe that we, as Americans, have more in common than not. And I have seen too much of the good, generous, big-hearted optimism of the American people over these past 6 years to believe otherwise.

I will never stop trying to make our politics work better. That's what you deserve, and that's how we move this country forward. And, Kansas, we've got some big things to do together. [*Applause*] We've got some big things to do.

Now, we start this year with some good news. Our economy is creating jobs at the fastest pace since 1999. Our deficits are shrinking. Energy production is booming. Our troops are coming home. We have risen from recession in a better position, freer to write our own future than any nation on Earth. So now we've got to choose what our future will look like. And when I look out at this crowd, it's your generation in particular that's going to have to decide what this future looks like. Are we going to accept an economy where only a few of us do spectacularly well? Or do we commit ourselves to an economy that generates opportunity and rising incomes for everybody who's willing to work hard and make an effort? That's a choice we've got to make.

For 6 years, we've been working to rebuild our economy on a new foundation. And what I want people to know is, thanks to your hard work, thanks to your resilience, America is coming back. We believed we could reverse the tide of outsourcing and draw new jobs to our shore. And over the past 5 years, our businesses have created more than 11 million new jobs.

We believed we could reduce our dependence on foreign oil and protect our planet at

the same time. And today, America is number one in oil and gas, but we're also number one in wind power. And every 3 weeks, we bring as much solar power online as we did in all of 2008. We have doubled clean power production. And thanks not just to lower gas prices, but also higher fuel standards, the typical family this year should save about 750 bucks at the pump.

We believed that we could prepare our kids for this more competitive world, a 21st-century economy. And today, our younger students have earned the highest math and reading scores on record. Our high school graduation rate has hit an alltime high. And more young people like you are finishing college than ever before.

We believed that sensible regulations should encourage fair competition and shield families from ruin and prevent the kind of crisis that we saw in 2007, 2008. So today, we've got new tools to stop taxpayer-funded bailouts. And in the past year alone, about 10 million uninsured Americans have finally gained the security of health coverage. We've gotten that done.

Now, at every step, we were told that we were misguided or too ambitious or the laws we passed would explode deficits or crush jobs or destroy the economy. I just want everybody to remember that. [*Laughter*] Roll back the tape. [*Laughter*] Roll back the tape. And instead, we've seen the fastest economic growth in over a decade. We've seen the deficits cut by two-thirds. People's 401(k)s are in better shape because the stock market has doubled. We have put ourselves in a position in which the economy potentially can grow not just for next year or the year after that, but over the next decade, and generate the kind of jobs that all of you will fill.

Audience member. Thank you!

The President. So the verdict is in: Middle class economics works. Providing opportunity for everybody works. The ruling on the field stands. [*Laughter*] And these policies are going to continue to work as long as we don't let politics get in the way, especially politics in Washington. We can't put the security of families at risk by taking away their health insurance. We're not going to get rid of the rules we put in place to check recklessness on Wall Street. If those efforts come to my desk, I will veto them, because we're moving in the right direction.

And here's what's most important. Today, because the economy is growing at a faster pace, we're starting to actually see wages tick up for the first time in a very long time. And a survey of small businesses showed, they are more likely to provide raises to their employees than any time since 2007. So we've got to make sure that all people have the tools and the support that they need to take advantage of this growing economy. It's not good enough just to not screw it up, let's build on the momentum and move it even further. Let's keep it going. Let's keep it going. That's what we've got to focus on. [*Applause*] That's what we've got to focus on.

So how do we restore this link between hard work and being able to get ahead? How do we make sure that everybody is doing their fair share, everybody has a fair shot, and everybody is playing by the same set of rules? How do we make sure that everybody not only shares in success, but also is able to contribute to the success of the United States of America? That is middle economics—middle class economics. That's our project. And that's something that, by the way, shouldn't be a Democratic or a Republican issue. That should be an American issue. All of us should want that kind of success for the middle class and everybody who's willing to work hard to try to get into the middle class.

So what does middle class economics require? Well, the first thing is trying to give people a sense of security at a time when they economy is so rapidly changing, so dynamic, that people can't rely on being in one place, in one job for 30 years, 40 years. That's not going to be the career that young people like you have. You're going to be doing a whole range of things, and it's going to be fluid. And you're going to have to be taking advantage of opportunities, and you're going to have to adapt to new circumstances.

And so part of what we have to do is to make sure that we're giving families some sense of security in the midst of all this change. And that means helping folks afford childcare. It means helping folks afford college. It means helping folks get paid leave at work. It means making sure people have health care. It means helping the first-time home buyer. It means helping folks save for retirement—although you guys don't have to worry about that for a while. [*Laughter*] I see he raised his hand, "Actually, I do." [*Laughter*]

And so I'm sending Congress a budget, a plan, that's going to help a family with all of these issues: lowering the taxes for working families by thousands of dollars, putting it—money back into their pockets so that they can have a little bit of cushion in their lives. We can do that. And today I want to focus on one of those ideas, and that's childcare.

Now, I mentioned my grandparents were from Kansas. Well, my grandfather, Stanley Dunham, he went to Europe to fight in World War II. And while he was gone, my grandmother, she was like Rosie the Riveter—Madelyn. She worked on an assembly plant for bombers. And because it was a national priority, having women in the workforce was critical. All right? My grandmother worked at a bomber assembly line in Wichita. And by that time, my mom had already been born. So this country provided universal health—childcare because they understood that if women are working, they're going to need some help. Right? They understood that. And research shows that it was good for the kids, good for the parents. But we stopped doing it, even though almost every other advanced country on Earth continued to do it—learned from us and did it.

Now, in today's economy, when having both parents in the workforce is an economic necessity for many families, affordable, high-quality childcare and early childhood education, this—these aren't just nice-to-haves, this is a must-have. And studies show that children who get a high-quality early education earn more over their lifetimes than their peers who don't.

So think about that. You give somebody—you give parents support, and you give a child that little boost at the beginning, it lasts a lifetime, which means that the entire economy is more productive for a lifetime, for a generation. Young people who get that good early start are more likely to finish school; they're less likely to get in trouble with the law. And access to childcare can lead to higher employment and incomes for the moms, which means, the whole family is doing better.

So the point is, if we knew how to do this back in 1943 and '44, and here we are in 2015, what's the holdup? It is time that we stop treating childcare as a side issue or a quote, unquote, women's issue. This is a family issue. This is a national economic priority for all of us. We can do better than we're doing right now.

And right now, in 31 States, high-quality childcare costs more than a year of tuition at a State university. Think about that. And by the way, this is personal for me because Michelle, and I remember what it was like trying to—and we had good jobs. But trying to figure out how to manage childcare costs was extraordinary, at the same as you're paying back student loans. So this is what—this is something you have a deep interest in, all of you. Because I'm assuming some of you are going to have a little bit of school debt. [*Laughter*] Just a little. And then, you start a family, and now you want to start saving for their college education. But in the meantime, you're already paying the equivalent of college tuition just to make sure that they're okay at home. This is a strain that cuts—and by the way, Republican families feel it just as much as Democratic families. [*Laughter*] They don't—there's no distinction.

I don't want any family to face the choice between not working or leaving their children in unsafe or poor-quality childcare. We are a better country than that. [*Applause*] We're a better country than that.

So that's why my plan will make quality childcare available and affordable to every middle class and low-income family in America with young children. We're going to expand access to high-quality care for more than 1 million children, and we're going to offer a tax cut

of up $3,000 per child per year. I don't want anybody being "daycare poor."

And we're going to build on a bipartisan law that I signed last year to improve the quality of childcare options so that parents know their children are well cared for, because we also want to lift up the quality of the facilities there.

And I just had the chance to visit the Community Children's Center, which is a Head Start center here in Lawrence. Had a chance to spend time with 48 lucky kids. [*Laughter*] Because they're teachers are wonderful, not because the—although, they all say, "I know you." [*Laughter*] "I see you on TV." [*Laughter*] That's what they always say, "I seen you in—on TV." I say, yes. Yes. [*Laughter*] "You're the President." [*Laughter*]

So you have these wonderful teachers, and the light in all of these children's eyes, the sense of possibility and potential for these kids, made me just that much more determined to keep strengthening and keep promoting and expanding early childhood education: to give all of our children a strong start. I want to support expectant mothers. I want to make sure we've got universal childcare to preschool for all. It's the best investment we can make. It is the right thing to do. We can do more to help families make ends meet.

Now, even as we're doing these things, there are some other things we've got to do to help families who are middle class or working their way into the middle class. Higher wages helps, which means Congress still needs to pass a law that makes sure a woman is paid the same as a man for doing the same work. I mean, come on now, it's 2015. This should be sort of a no-brainer. Congress still needs to raise the minimum wage. Like I said on Tuesday, if there are Members of Congress who really believe that they can work full time and support a family on less than $15,000 a year, they should try it. And if not, they should vote to give millions of hard-working people across America the raise that they deserve.

And if we're going to make sure that more and more people are earning higher wages down the road as the economy continues to transform, then we've got to help to make sure that more Americans like all of you are in a position to upgrade your skills. That's what you're doing here. And that's the second part of middle class economics. That's why we've been working to help more young people access and afford college. That's why I took action to help millions of students cap payments on their loans at 10 percent of their income. So if you want to go into teaching or you want to go into public service or you want to go into basic research—any field that doesn't pay you a huge amount of money—you can do it.

I want to make—I want to work with Congress to make sure every student who's already burdened with loans can find a way to refinance and reduce your monthly payments. And that's why I'm sending Congress a bold, new plan to lower the cost of community college to zero. [*Applause*] Down to zero. In the new economy, 2 years of college should be as free and as universal as high school is today.

The third part of middle class economics means we've got to build the most competitive economy in the world, and that means building the best infrastructure, opening new markets so we can sell products around the world, and investing in research so we keep on being the creators of new products and businesses can keep creating jobs right here in Kansas and around the world—and sell them around the world.

Now, the good news is, Lawrence gets it. You're—that's why you're encouraging private companies to compete against one another to offer high-speed broadband at better prices. And now you've got networks as fast as some of the best in the world: There's Hong Kong, there's Tokyo, there's Paris, and there's Lawrence. [*Laughter*]

So helping families feel more secure, including helping with childcare costs and improving the quality of childcare options; making sure that you have the capacity to finance, constantly upgrading your skills; making sure that we've got a competitive economy, including not just roads and bridges and traditional infrastructure, but the new infrastructure of the 21st century—those are the things we need to do to keep the momentum going.

Now, Republicans in Congress may disagree with some of my ideas. You noticed that I didn't get as much applause from them as I was hoping. [*Laughter*] But the truth, is when it comes to infrastructure and research, both parties generally agree that it's important. They say that to me privately; they just can't applaud it publicly. [*Laughter*]

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Yeah, right.

So, too often, where we get stuck is how to pay for these investments. Because these things cost money. Roads don't build themselves. Power grids and sewer lines and basic research and—those things don't pay for themselves.

And as Americans, we don't mind paying our fair share of taxes, as long as everybody else does too. The problem we've got is, we've got lobbyists that have rigged the Tax Code with loopholes that let some corporations pay nothing while others are paying full freight. We've got the super-rich getting giveaways they don't need and then middle class folks not getting the breaks that they do need for things like childcare.

So what I told Congress is, let's just close those loopholes. Let's stop rewarding companies that keep profits abroad; reward companies that are creating jobs right here in the United States. Let's close loopholes that let the top 1 percent or .01 percent avoid paying certain taxes—use that money to help more Americans pay for college and childcare. Let's have a Tax Code that truly helps working Americans get a leg up in this new economy. It's a good investment that will ultimately be good for everybody.

So that's what I believe in: helping hard-working families make ends meet, giving everybody the tools they need to find good-paying jobs in the new economy, keeping our economy strong and competitive, making sure we've got a Tax Code that is fair so that we can get all these things done and grow the economy well into the future. That's where I think America needs to go. And that's where I believe Americans want to go. It's going to make our economy stronger not just a year from now or 10 years from now, but deep into the century ahead.

And I understand Republicans who disagree with my approach. So what I've said to them is, fine, show me your ideas to pay for things like R&D and infrastructure. Explain to me how you want to help families pay for college and for childcare.

It's perfectly fair for them to say, we've got a better way for meeting these national priorities, and then to specify what those ideas are. What you can't do is simply pretend that issues like childcare or student debt aren't out there, that they're not important. You can't pretend that there's nothing we can do to help middle class families get ahead, because I've seen how we've been able to help middle class families get ahead when we make an effort.

The answer can't just be no to everything. I don't mind hearing no to some things, but it can't be no to everything. At some point, you've got to say yes to something. I want to get to yes! Tell me what you want to do. Let's get to yes on helping more families get by. I want to get to yes on childcare. I want to get to yes on more young people going to college and not being loaded up with debt. That's what I want to get to.

I want to get to yes for folks like Steve Ozark, from right here in Lawrence. Where is Steve? I know I saw him. He was around here. There, that's—you're not Steve. [*Laughter*] There he is right there.

So last year, Steve wrote me a letter about his vision for this country: a place where every American, he said, has "a place at the table." And 25 years ago, Steve and his girlfriend, now his wife, were living paycheck to paycheck, with a baby on the way. And for a while, they turned to food stamps to get by. And then, they took out students loans so that his wife could go to college and get a job and climb the ladder of success. And today, they spend their time helping others in their community find a place at the table, because, as Steve wrote in this letter, it's "what God and Grandma taught us to do." God and Grandma, those—now, that's some good authority right there.

The point is, is that we're going to disagree on politics sometimes, but we don't have to be so viciously divided as a people. We all know what God and Grandma taught us to do. [*Laughter*] Whoever we are—Republican, Democrat, male, female, young, old, Black, White, gay, straight—we all share a common vision for our future. We want a better country for your generation and for your kids' generation, a place where, as Steve wrote, everybody has "a place at the table." I want that country to be one that shows the world what I know is still to be true, that we are still not a collection of just red States and blue States, we are still the United States of America.

So we've made it through some hard times, but we've laid a new foundation, Jayhawks. We've got a new future to write. The young people here are going to write a new future for America. Let's get started right now.

Thank you. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:30 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Alyssa Cole, student, University of Kansas; former Sen. Robert J. Dole; and Julia Ozark, wife of Lawrence, KS, resident Steve Ozark.

Statement on the 42d Anniversary of the Supreme Court Decision in *Roe* v. *Wade*

January 22, 2015

Forty-two years ago today, the U.S. Supreme Court issued its ruling in *Roe* v. *Wade,* a decision that protects a woman's freedom to make her own choices about her body and her health and reaffirms a fundamental American value that government should not intrude in our most private and personal family matters.

I am deeply committed to protecting this core constitutional right, and I believe that efforts like H.R. 7, the bill the House considered today, would intrude on women's reproductive freedom and access to health care and unnecessarily restrict the private insurance choices that consumers have today. The Federal Government should not be injecting itself into decisions best made between women, their families, and their doctors. I am also deeply committed to continuing our work to reduce unintended pregnancies, support maternal and child health, promote adoptions, and minimize the need for abortion.

Today, as we reflect on this critical moment in our history, may we all rededicate ourselves to ensuring that our daughters have the same rights, freedoms, and opportunities as our sons.

Statement on the United Nations General Assembly Meeting on the Rise of Anti-Semitism

January 22, 2015

Earlier this week, in my State of the Union Address, I affirmed our commitment and responsibility as Americans to speak out against the deplorable resurgence of anti-Semitism in certain parts of the world. Today the United States is joining partners from around the world in doing just that. At the request of the United States and 36 other nations, the United Nations General Assembly will gather to discuss the growing scourge of anti-Semitism. It is the first such meeting of the General Assembly and an important moment both in confronting this global challenge and in our ongoing work to promote the universal rights and fundamental freedoms memorialized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Anti-Semitic attacks like the recent terrorist attack on a kosher supermarket in Paris pose a threat that extends beyond the Jewish community. They also threaten the values we hold dear:

pluralism, diversity, and the freedoms of religion and expression. Moreover, when the human rights and fundamental freedoms of Jews are repressed, the rights and freedoms of other minorities and other sectors are often not far behind. For all these reasons, combating anti-Semitism is an essential responsibility for all of us. Every nation, every region, and every community must do its part. I call on the members of the U.N. General Assembly to lend their voice to this struggle and pledge the unwavering support of the United States as we wage this fight together.

Statement on the Death of Former Senator Wendell H. Ford
January 22, 2015

Michelle and I were saddened to learn of the passing of former Senator Wendell Ford. A veteran, businessman, Governor, and four-term Senator, Wendell dedicated his life to the people of Kentucky. He believed deeply in fairness: everyone doing their part, everyone getting a fair shot. A formidable political strategist, he fought to make sure all Americans had equal access to the polls, championed paying workers a decent wage and extending a helping hand to those looking for work, and mentored scores of young people who entered public service with Wendell's advice and support. Few in politics were as admired as he, and few have had as great an impact on his beloved Kentucky. Wendell leaves behind an extraordinary legacy of service and a Commonwealth and country that are stronger and fairer thanks to him. Michelle and I send our condolences to his wife Jean and all the members of the Ford family.

Statement on the Death of King Abdallah bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia
January 22, 2015

It is with deep respect that I express my personal condolences and the sympathies of the American people to the family of King Abdallah bin Abd al-Aziz and to the people of Saudi Arabia. King Abdallah's life spanned from before the birth of modern Saudi Arabia through its emergence as a critical force within the global economy and a leader among Arab and Islamic nations. He took bold steps in advancing the Arab Peace Initiative, an endeavor that will outlive him as an enduring contribution to the search for peace in the region. At home, King Abdallah's vision was dedicated to the education of his people and to greater engagement with the world.

As our countries worked together to confront many challenges, I always valued King Abdallah's perspective and appreciated our genuine and warm friendship. As a leader, he was always candid and had the courage of his convictions. One of those convictions was his steadfast and passionate belief in the importance of the U.S.-Saudi relationship as a force for stability and security in the Middle East and beyond. The closeness and strength of the partnership between our two countries is part of King Abdallah's legacy. May God grant him peace.

Remarks to the United States Conference of Mayors
January 23, 2015

Thank you! Hey! Good to see you, mayors. Good to see you. All right, everybody, have a seat, have a seat. I would have thought that would bring back bad memories for Kevin, playing that song. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank Kevin for that introduction. I have to say that that introduction is longer than my remarks and more exciting. [*Laughter*] So I'm feeling a little outshone here by Kevin. But as everybody knows, Kevin has that

flair about him; he did when he was a professional basketball player. He, not surprisingly, has brought that flair to his outstanding work in Sacramento, and we're very, very proud of him. So I just want to thank him for his outstanding leadership, as well as the introduction. Give Kevin a big round of applause.

I want to thank Stephanie Rawlings-Blake of Baltimore and Mayor Mick Cornett of Oklahoma City for their leadership as well. We are very proud of them. And I want to just thank all of you.

We've got—is that playing again, Kevin? [*Laughter*] We've got over 200 mayors here, representing tens of millions of Americans. And I think as you've seen today, we take our partnership with you seriously because you're often the place where change happens fastest. That's one of the reasons why I named—two of my Cabinet members happen to be former mayors; a former president of this conference, Jerry Abramson of Louisville, is one of my top advisers.

The other night, I talked about what we can do together to make sure that middle class economics helps more Americans get ahead in the new economy. And that's something we want to partner with you on as well. And in some areas—in fact, many areas—we already have.

Last year, we kicked off the Mayors' Maker Challenge to support local entrepreneurs working to create the industries and jobs of the future. And Mayor Greg Fischer of Louisville stepped up. Now students and engineers are creating smarter appliances at a community space in town, and hundreds of folks are getting trained for local software development jobs.

We've worked with some of you to raise the minimum wage without waiting for Congress. And more than 20 cities and counties have stepped up to raise the wage since 2013. Some have passed sick leave laws as well, and I want to help more of you do that. We launched the Mayors' Challenge To End Veterans Homelessness. And Mitch Landrieu of New Orleans stepped up. Just a few weeks ago, New Orleans became the first major city to wipe out homelessness among veterans, and we could not be prouder of them. Thank you. And Mayor Greg Stanton in Phoenix, Mayor Ralph Becker in Salt Lake City are closing in on that goal as well.

We issued a "My Brother's Keeper" Community Challenge to create more pathways of success for boys and young men of color, and all young people, and over 150 local and tribal leaders have stepped up. So in Birmingham, Mayor William Bell and business leaders have created a mentoring program. In New Haven, Mayor Toni Harp is canvassing neighborhoods along with police, teachers, and firefighters to connect kids with services and support.

So that's what mayors do. They get things done. They make things happen. And on other urgent issues, like responding to climate change or getting more families insured, rebuilding infrastructure, making sure that our youngest Americans get the best start in life with quality pre-K, mayors like you are helping to get it done. And we want to help.

So I had a chance to meet some folks earlier before I came out here, and I just emphasized to them what I always do whenever I'm at a Mayors Conference, and that is to emphasize that we are here in large part to make sure that you are able to achieve your goals. Because if cities are successful, then America is going to be successful. That's not disrespect towards suburbs, that's not disrespect towards rural communities. The truth is, in every State of our Union, the city and its health becomes a bellwether for how well the State as a whole is doing. And that's true around the world as well.

What we know now is that successful cities and metropolitan areas end up being the engines by which communities and States and ultimately nations succeed. And what I also say whenever I meet with mayors is that I have confidence in you because the fact is that you can't afford to be ideological. I don't care whether you're Republican, Democratic, or Independent, the truth of the matter is, folks want to make sure that their garbage is picked up, that their roads are functioning properly and traffic isn't sucking away their days. They want to make sure that their schools are high

quality, and they want to make sure that their streets are free from crime.

And so you don't have the luxury of just yacking instead of doing. [*Laughter*] Because at some point, people are going to ask, what are you getting done? And that, in this town, is always refreshing—[*laughter*]—and I think presents enormous opportunities, which is part of the reason why our Cabinet members are always so excited to present to you what they're doing and to find out what's working for you.

Because my instructions to my Cabinet over these last 2 years is that we want to squeeze every possible opportunity to do some good from this fourth quarter. And a lot of stuff happens in the fourth quarter. [*Laughter*] And one of the most promising avenues for us is to partner with you and help you do some of the terrific things you're already doing and help you with visions of things that you want to do in the future.

And I can guarantee you that we will not only partner with you aggressively, but we're also going to be creative and show flexibility. And if you have ideas that don't neatly fit into what's already being done, we're going to try to come up with answers to make sure that you can succeed.

All right? So thank you all for being here. Thank you for the great work that you are doing. With that, I'm going to take a couple of questions, but I think we're going to ask our fourth estate just to step out 1 second so we can let our hair down, as they say. [*Laughter*]

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:54 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Kevin M. Johnson of Sacramento, CA; Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Julián Castro, in his former capacity as mayor of San Antonio, TX; Secretary of Transportation Anthony R. Foxx, in his former capacity as mayor of Charlotte, NC; and Jerry E. Abramson, Director, Office of Intergovernmental Affairs.

The President's Weekly Address
January 24, 2015

Hi, everybody. This week, in my State of the Union Address, I talked about what we can do to make sure middle class economics helps more Americans get ahead in the new economy.

See, after some tough years, and thanks to some tough decisions we made, our economy is creating jobs at the fastest pace since 1999. Our deficits are shrinking. Our energy production is booming. Our troops are coming home. Thanks to the hard work and resilience of Americans like you, we've risen from recession freer to write our own future than any other nation on Earth.

Now we have to choose what we want that future to look like. Will we accept an economy where only a few of us do spectacularly well? Or will we commit ourselves to an economy that generates rising incomes and rising chances for everyone who makes the effort?

I believe the choice is clear. Today, thanks to a growing economy, the recovery is touching more and more lives. Wages are finally starting to rise again. Let's keep that going. Let's do more to restore the link between hard work and growing opportunity for every American. That's what middle class economics is: the idea that this country does best when everyone gets their fair shot, everyone does their fair share, and everyone plays by the same set of rules.

Middle class economics means helping workers feel more secure in a world of constant change, making it easier to afford childcare, college, paid leave, health care, a home, and retirement. Middle class economics means doing more to help Americans upgrade their skills through opportunities like apprenticeships and 2 years of free community college so we can keep earning higher wages down the road. Middle class economics means building the most competitive economy in the world by building the best infrastructure, opening new markets so we can sell our products around the world and investing in research so that businesses keep creating good jobs right here.

And we can afford to do these things by closing loopholes in our Tax Code that stack the decks for special interests and the super-rich and against responsible companies and the middle class.

This is where we have to go if we're going to succeed in the new economy. I know that there are Republicans in Congress who disagree with my approach, and I look forward to hearing their ideas for how we can pay for what the middle class needs to grow. But what we can't do is simply pretend that things like childcare or college aren't important or pretend there's nothing we can do to help middle class families get ahead.

Because we've got work to do. As a country, we have made it through some hard times. But we've laid a new foundation. We've got a new future to write. And I'm eager to get to work.

Thanks, everybody, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 11:05 a.m. on January 22 in Room 1440A (Soccer Locker Room) of the Anschutz Sports Pavilion at the University of Kansas in Lawrence, KS, for broadcast on January 24. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 23, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on January 24.

Statement on the Death of Ernie Banks
January 24, 2015

Michelle and I send our condolences to the family of Ernie Banks and to every Chicagoan and baseball fan who loved him. Ernie came up through the Negro Leagues, making $7 a day. He became the first African American to play for the Chicago Cubs and the first number the team retired. Along the way, he became known as much for his 512 home runs and back-to-back National League MVPs as for his cheer, his optimism, and his love of the game.

As a Hall of Famer, Ernie was an incredible ambassador for baseball and for the city of Chicago. He was beloved by baseball fans everywhere, including Michelle, who, when she was a girl, used to sit with her dad and watch him play on TV. And in 2013, it was my honor to present Ernie with the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Somewhere, the sun is shining, the air is fresh, his team's behind him, and Mr. Class—"Mr. Cub"—is ready to play two.

NOTE: This statement was released by the Office of the Press Secretary as a statement by the President and the First Lady.

Statement on the Death of Haruna Yukawa
January 24, 2015

The United States strongly condemns the brutal murder of Japanese citizen Haruna Yukawa by the terrorist group ISIL. Our condolences today are with the people of Japan for their terrible loss. We renew our call for the immediate release of Kenji Goto and all other remaining hostages. We stand shoulder to shoulder with our ally Japan and applaud its commitment to peace and development in a region far from its shores. We will work together to bring the perpetrators of these murders to justice and will continue to take decisive action to degrade and ultimately defeat ISIL.

NOTE: The statement referred to freelance journalist Kenji Goto, who traveled to Raqqa, Syria, in October 2014 to plead for Mr. Yukawa's release, and was subsequently taken hostage by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

Remarks With Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India and an Exchange With Reporters in New Delhi, India
January 25, 2015

Prime Minister Modi. Mr. President, and members of the media, it is a great pleasure and privilege to welcome back President Obama and the First Lady in India.

Mr. President, we are honored that you accepted our invitation to be the chief guest of our Republic Day. And I know how busy you are. It is special because on this day, we celebrate the values shared by the world's two largest democracies. You are also the first United States President to visit India twice in office. It reflects the transformation in our relationship. It shows your deep personal commitment to this partnership. It tells us that our two nations are prepared to step forward firmly to accept the responsibility of this global partnership for our two countries and for shaping the character of this century.

The promise and potential of this relationship had never been in doubt. This is a natural global partnership. It has become even more relevant in the digital age. It is needed even more in our world for far-reaching changes and wider-spread turmoil. The success of this partnership is important for our progress and for advancing peace, stability, and prosperity around the world.

From the turn of the century, we had begun transforming our relationship, but we have to convert a good start into lasting progress. This requires translating our vision into sustained action and concrete achievements.

Mr. President, in the last few months, I see new excitement and confidence in this relationship. I see renewed energy in our engagement. Thank you for your leadership and for setting the tone last September when I visited White House. The civil nuclear agreement was the centerpiece of our transformed relationship, which demonstrated new trust. It also created a new economic opportunity and expanded our options for clean energy.

In the course of the past 4 months, we have worked with a sense of purpose to move it forward. I'm pleased that 6 years after we signed our bilateral agreement, we are moving towards commercial cooperation, consistent with our law, our international legal obligations, and technical and commercial viability.

President Obama had also assured me of strong U.S. efforts in support of India's full membership of the four international export control regimes at earliest.

Today we also decided to take up our growing defense cooperation to the new level. We have agreed in principle to pursue codevelopment and coproduction of specific advanced defense projects. This will help upgrade our domestic defense industry and expand the manufacturing sector in India.

We will also explore cooperation in the area of advanced defense technologies. We have renewed our defense framework agreement. We will deepen our cooperation on maritime security.

Terrorism remains a principal global threat. It is taking on a new character, even as an existing challenge persists. We agreed that we need a comprehensive global strategy and approach to combat with it. There should be no distinction between terrorist groups. Every country must fulfill its commitment to eliminate terrorist safe havens and bring terrorists to justice. Our two countries will deepen our bilateral security cooperation against terrorist groups, and we will further enhance our counterterrorism capabilities, including in the area of technology.

President Obama and I agree that a strong and growing economic relationship is vital for the success of our strategic partnership. Economic growth in our two countries is becoming stronger. Our business climate is improving. This gives me a great optimism over our economic ties.

In addition, we have established a number of effective bilateral mechanisms to identify opportunities and also help our business, trade, and investment more. We will also resume our dialogue on bilateral investment treaty. We will also restart discussions on social security agree-

ment that is so important for the hundreds of thousands of Indian professionals working in the United States.

For President Obama and me, clean and renewable energy is a personal and national priority. We discussed our ambitions, national efforts, and goals to increase the use of clean and renewable energy. We also agreed to further enhance our excellent and innovative partnership in this area. I asked him to lead international efforts in making renewable energy more accessible and affordable to the world.

President and I expressed hope for a successful Paris conference on climate change this year. We will continue to refine our cooperation in science and technology, innovation, agriculture, health, education, and skills. These are central to the future of our two countries and also give us an opportunity to help others around the world. Indeed, our strategic partnership will only be complete if we assume our responsibility to work together to promote development and connectivity in our vast region.

President Obama and I agreed to pursue this goal with sense of priority. President and I had an excellent discussion on global and regional issues; in particularly, we renewed our commitment to deepen our cooperation to advance peace, stability, prosperity in Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean regions, which is critical for the future of our two countries and the destiny of this world. We will also work closely to help Afghanistan through its transition.

Our relationship stands at a new level today. We have outlined a broad vision for our friendship and cooperation that reflects the opportunities and challenges of this century.

As Lord Buddha said, "Noble friends and companions are the whole of the holy life." We have decided to give this critical partnership its due trust and sustained attention. For this, we have agreed that India and the United States must [have]* regular summits at greater frequency. And we also established hotlines between myself and Barack and our National Security Advisers.

At the beginning of this year, we start a new journey. Let me welcome you once again, Mr. President. It is a great pleasure to have you with us. Thank you very much. Thanks a lot.

President Obama. Namaste. Thank you, Prime Minister Modi, for those very generous words. I want to express my profound gratitude to not only you, but the people of India for the incredible hospitality that has been shown to me and Michelle. We are thrilled to be back in India. *Mera pyaar bhara namaskar.* [*Laughter*]

Mr. Prime Minister, thank you for the invitation to join the people of India on Republic Day. I am honored to be the first American President to attend this celebration, as well as the first President to visit India twice. And this reflects my commitment, since the beginning of my Presidency, to deepen our ties with India. I'm pleased to be joined by members of my administration as well as Members of Congress and business leaders from the United States, all who believe that a strong relationship with India is critical for America's success in the 21st century.

As two great democracies, two innovative economies, two societies dedicated to the empowerment of our people—including millions of Indian Americans—we are natural partners. When I addressed your Parliament on my last visit, I laid out my vision for how India and the United States could build a defining partnership for the 21st century. And since then, we've made significant progress. Our trade has increased. Our militaries exercise together more. We're cooperating on key global challenges, from nuclear proliferation to global health.

And, Mr. Prime Minister, your election—and your strong personal commitment to the India-U.S. relationship—gives us an opportunity to further energize these efforts. I was proud to welcome you to the White House last fall. Your reputation preceded you. As many of you know, in New York, the Prime Minister appeared in Madison Square Garden and was greeted like a Bollywood star. [*Laughter*] And

* White House correction.

it was, I think, a signal of the deep friendship between our peoples as well as our close ties that we are working to expand even further.

At the White House, we agreed to take this partnership to a new level. We advanced that work today. Prime Minister Modi, thank you for hosting me, including our *chai pe charcha.* [*Laughter*] I—we need more of those in the White House. [*Laughter*] But even as this visit is rich with symbolism, we made substantive progress. Prime Minister has already indicated, the United States and India have declared a new Declaration of Friendship that elevates and formalizes our partnership. And not only is it grounded in the values we share, but it commits us to more regular meetings at the leaders level and sets up frequent consultations across our government.

We agreed that our trade and economic partnerships must focus on improving the daily lives of our people. Prime Minister Modi described for me his ambitious efforts to empower rural Indians with bank accounts and to ensure clean water and clean air for the Indian people. And we want to be partners in this effort.

In the last few years, trade between our two countries has increased by some 60 percent, toward a record a hundred billion dollars. We want to trade even more. So we welcome the reforms that the Prime Minister is pursuing to make it easier to do business here in India.

Today we achieved a breakthrough understanding on two issues that were holding up our ability to advance our civil nuclear cooperation, and we're committed to moving towards full implementation. And this is an important step that shows how we can work together to elevate our relationship. We also, as the Prime Minister noted, agreed to resume discussions about a possible bilateral investment treaty. And we will continue to pursue export reforms so that we can advance more high-tech collaborations with India.

I'm also pleased that we agreed to a number of important steps to promote clean energy and to confront climate change. We very much support India's ambitious goal for solar energy and stand ready to speed this expansion with additional financing. We're also launching new joint projects to improve air quality in Indian cities. The United States will share more data and develop tools to help India assess and adapt to the impact of climate change and to help vulnerable communities become more resilient.

And going forward, we've agreed to work together to make concrete progress this year towards phasing out hydrofluorocarbons under the Montreal Protocol, and the Prime Minister and I made a personal commitment to work together to pursue a strong global climate agreement in Paris. As I indicated to him, I think India's voice is very important on this issue. Perhaps no country could potentially be more affected by the impacts of climate change, and no country is going to be more important in moving forward a stronger agreement than India. So we appreciate his leadership.

We agreed to deepen our defense and security cooperation. We've renewed the framework that guides our defense cooperation for another 10 years. And in a major step forward for our relationship, our Defense Technology and Trade Initiative will allow us to jointly develop and produce new defense technologies. We've also agreed to a new vision for the Asia-Pacific so that we're doing more together to advance our shared security and prosperity in this critical region.

I thanked the Prime Minister for India's strong counterterrorism cooperation and reiterated, even as America's combat mission is over in Afghanistan, we're going to continue to be strong and reliable partners for the Afghan people, who have benefited from India's generous assistance over many years. I thanked the Prime Minister for his continued support for ongoing efforts to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon and to arrive at a just, diplomatic solution.

And finally, we discussed what more we can do as global partners. I reiterated—and reiterate to the Indian people today—that we support a reformed U.N. Security Council that includes India as a permanent member. At the same time, we see India playing a greater role in ensuring international security and peace

and meeting shared challenges. As a leading contributor to U.N. peacekeeping missions for many years, India can help the world do even more to protect citizens in conflict zones. We welcome India's leadership in combating diseases and promoting global health that advances the rights and dignity of citizens around the world.

So, Mr. Prime Minister, thank you for welcoming me. I very much look forward to tomorrow's ceremonies, which I'm told are truly spectacular. I'm looking forward to a chance to speak directly to the Indian people on the radio and in my speech on Tuesday about what I believe we can achieve together.

This new partnership will not happen overnight. It's going to take time to build and some patience. But it's clear from this visit that we have a new and perhaps unprecedented opportunity, and deepening our ties with India is going to remain a top foreign policy priority for my administration.

So let me just say, *Chalein saath saath.* Thank you very much.

Moderator. I now call upon Julie Pace of AP to ask her question.

Ukraine/Russia/Yemen/U.S. Counterterrorism Strategy

Q. Thank you, Mr. President and Mr. Prime Minister.

Mr. President, I wanted to ask you about the situations in both Yemen and in Ukraine. On Yemen, you've held up the U.S. counterterrorism campaign there as a model for what you're hoping to achieve in your mission against the Islamic State group. How does the political upheaval in Yemen affect U.S. efforts there? And will it cause you in any way to retool aspects of your broader counterterrorism strategy?

And on Ukraine, pro-Russian rebels are again launching new offenses. How at this point can you justify not taking a different approach, given that the Minsk agreement has all but failed, and sanctions may have had an impact on the Russian economy, but they don't appear to be changing Russia's calculus when it comes to Ukraine?

And, Mr. Prime Minister, I wanted to go back to climate change. White House officials have said that the recent U.S.—that they hope that the recent U.S.-China agreement can spur countries like India to make similar commitments to cut emissions. I'm wondering if you feel any pressure to take that kind of action because of the China agreement. And can a Paris climate summit produce a substantial result without that type of commitment from India?

Thank you.

President Obama. Good. Well, first of all, with respect to Ukraine, what I've said consistently is that we have no interest in seeing Russia weakened or its economy in shambles. We have a profound interest, as I believe every country does, in promoting a core principle, which is, large countries don't bully smaller countries. They don't encroach on their territorial integrity. They don't encroach on their sovereignty. And that's what's at stake in Ukraine. And what we have done is to consistently isolate Russia on this issue and to raise the costs that Russia confronts.

Now, when you say that we should take a different approach, Julie, I don't know exactly what you're referring to. I've been very clear that it would not be effective for us to engage in a military conflict with Russia on this issue, but what we can do is to continue to support Ukraine's ability to control its own territory. And that involves a combination of the economic pressure that's been brought to bear in sanctions, the diplomatic isolation that has been brought to bear against Russia, and as important as anything, making sure that we're continuing to provide the support that Ukraine needs to sustain its economy during this transition period and to help its military with basic supplies and equipment, as well as the continuing training and exercises that have been taking place between NATO and Ukraine for quite some time.

We are deeply concerned about the latest break in the cease-fire and the aggression that these separatists—with Russian backing, Russian equipment, Russian financing, Russian training, and Russian troops—are conducting. And we will continue to take the approach that

we've taken in the past, which is to ratchet up the pressure on Russia.

And I will look at all additional options that are available to us short of a military confrontation in trying to address this issue. And we'll be in close consultation with our international partners, and particularly European partners, to assure that they stay in lockstep with us on this issue. What we've been very successful at is maintaining unity across the Atlantic on this issue, and that's going to be a continuing priority of mine.

But ultimately, what I've said before remains true. If Mr. Putin and if Russia are hellbent on engaging in military conflicts, their military is more powerful than Ukraine's, and the question is going to be whether they continue to pursue a path that not only is bad for the people of Ukraine, but is bad for the people of Russia, and are we able to continue to raise the costs, even as we're creating an off ramp diplomatically, that eventually, the Kremlin starts pursuing a more sensible policy and resolving this issue.

With regard to Yemen, my top priority has and always will be to make sure that our people on the ground in Yemen are safe. That's something that we have been emphasizing for the last several months and builds on the work that we've done—been doing over the last several years. It is a dangerous country in a dangerous part of the world.

A second priority is to maintain our counterterrorism pressure on Al Qaida in Yemen, and we have been doing that. And I saw some news reports that suggested somehow that that counterterrorism activity had been suspended. That is not accurate. We continue to go after high-value targets inside of Yemen and to continue—and we will continue to maintain the pressure that's required to keep the American people safe.

We are concerned about what has always been a fragile central government and the forces inside of Yemen that are constantly threatening to break apart between North-South, between Houthi and Sunni, inside of Yemen. And this is one more sequence in what has been an ongoing turbulent process inside of Yemen.

And what we are advising not just the various factions inside of Yemen, but also working with our partners like the Gulf countries who have impact and influence inside of Yemen, is that at this point, what's needed is to respect a constitutional process that can resolve some of these differences peacefully and assure that all the groups inside of Yemen are resorting to political rather than military means to resolve these differences.

But I guess the point, Julie, is Yemen has never been a perfect democracy or a island of stability. What I've said is, is that our efforts to go after terrorist networks inside of Yemen without a occupying U.S. army, but rather by partnering and intelligence-sharing with that local government, is the approach that we're going to need to take. And that continues to be the case. The alternative would be for us to play Whac-A-Mole every time there is a terrorist actor inside of any given country, to deploy U.S. troops. And that's not a sustainable strategy.

So we'll continue to try to refine and fine tune this model, but it is the model that we're going to have to work with, because the alternative would be massive U.S. deployments in perpetuity, which would create its own blowback and cause probably more problems than it would potentially solve.

And we're going to have to recognize that there are going to be a number of the countries where terrorists have located that are not strong countries. That's the nature of the problem that we confront. Terrorists typically are not going to be locating and maintaining bases and having broad networks inside of countries that have strong central governments, strong militaries, and strong law enforcement. By definition, we're going to be operating in places where oftentimes there's a vacuum or capabilities are somewhat low. And we've got to just continually apply patience, training, resources, and we're—we then have to help in some cases broker political agreements as well.

So it is a long, arduous process. It is not neat, and it is not simple, but it is the best option that we have. And what we have shown is

that we can maintain the kind of pressure on these terrorist networks even in these kinds of difficult-to-operate environments.

[*At this point, Prime Minister Modi spoke in Hindi, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

Prime Minister Modi. It's my feeling that the agreement that has been concluded between the United States and China does not impose any pressure on us. India is an independent country, and there is no pressure on us from any country or any person.

But there is pressure. When we think about the future generations and what kind of a world we are going to give them, then there is pressure. Climate change itself is a huge pressure. Global warming is a huge pressure. And all those who think about a better life and a better world for the future generations, those who are concerned about this, then it is their duty and their conscience, they would want to give a better lifestyle to the future generations, a good life and a good environment. There is pressure for all those people. There is pressure on all countries, on all governments, and on all peoples. Thank you.

Moderator. Last question. Ashish Singh, ABP News.

India-U.S. Relations

Q. Thank you. Good evening to both Honorable Prime Minister and President Barack Obama. My question is for Prime Minister Narendra Modi. But let me first congratulate both of you for taking the relationship forward, more specifically on nuclear deal issue.

[*The reporter continued in Hindi, and Prime Minister Modi responded in Hindi. The interpreter began to translate Prime Minister Modi's response as follows.*]

Interpreter. Yes, we had talks, and——

Moderator. The question, please. The question.

Interpreter. The question, okay.

[*The interpreter translated the reporter's question and Prime Minister Modi's response as follows.*]

Q. Excellencies, both of you had talks, and my question is to Prime Minister Narendra Modi. You've held delegation-level talks, but we often see, as you did in the U.S., both Your Excellencies, beyond the delegation-level talks, go into a huddle and hold talks tete-a-tete. And what exactly do you talk about? And what is this friendship? And which are the issues that you discussed, and which are the issues that you can share with us?

Prime Minister Modi. Yes, we held very detailed talks, and some of these—and the results and the issues that were discussed, let's keep them behind curtains.

Why do we keep going into huddle and hold talks tete-a-tete? Well, I'd just like to say that I'm fairly new in this area. But with this little experience that I have gained over this short period of time, I can say that relations between countries depends less on full stops and commas and more between the relationship between leaders, the openness, how much they know each other, and the chemistry between them. This is—this matters more and is very important.

In fact, far from the camera, when we speak, then we become closer to each other. Barack and I have forged a friendship. There is openness when we talk, and we even joke and share a lot together. I think this is the chemistry which has not only brought Washington and Delhi, Barack and I closer, but also the two peoples of the two countries closer. Personal chemistry between leaders is very important, and this can only grow. Thank you.

President Obama. I would just add, the Prime Minister, as I said, caused great excitement in the United States when he visited. And I do think that in addition to a personal friendship that we've been able to build in a fairly brief amount of time, we're also reflecting the warmth and affection between the Indian people and the American people.

Part of the reason we're such natural partners is because we share values: as former

colonies, as the two largest democracies in the world, as entrepreneurial nations, as people who believe in the freedom and dignity and worth of all individuals. And so it's not surprising, then, that we have a friendship, because hopefully, we're reflecting the values of our peoples. And what I'm very excited about is, given the Prime Minister's energy and ambition for his country and lifting people out of poverty and moving forward on the reform agenda that he's put forward, that not—that that affection can then be translated into very specific actions. And we're seeing that reflected here today.

He's right, though, we can't tell you everything that we talked about. Although, I will share one thing, and that is, we compared how much sleep each of us is getting. [*Laughter*] And it turns out that Modi is getting even less sleep than me. But of course, that's because he's still new. After you've been doing this for about 6 years, maybe he'll be able to get an extra hour.

All right? Thank you very much, everybody.

Prime Minister Modi. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 4:48 p.m. at Hyderabad House. In his remarks, he referred to President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia. Prime Minister Modi referred to National Security Adviser Ajit Kumar Doval of India.

Joint Statement—India-United States Delhi Declaration of Friendship
January 25, 2015

"Chalein saath saath; forward together we go." Reflecting the close ties between our two great democracies, India and the United States agree to elevate our long-standing strategic partnership, with a Declaration of Friendship that strengthens and expands the relationship between our two countries

"Sanjha Prayaas, SabkaVikaas; Shared Effort, Progress For All." Each step we take to strengthen the relationship is a step towards shaping international security, regional and global peace, prosperity and stability for years to come.

Signaling the natural affinity enjoyed by our two nations, this Declaration proclaims a higher level of trust and coordination that will continue to draw our Governments and people together across the spectrum of human endeavor for a better world.

The India-U.S. Vision Statement endorsed in September 2014 committed our nations to a long-term partnership for prosperity and peace, through which our countries work together to make our citizens and the global community, safer and more prosperous.

The Declaration makes tangible and enduring the commitment of our two countries to harness the inherent potential of our two democracies, and upgrades the unique nature of our relationship, committing our Governments to work through areas of difference.

Through this Declaration of Friendship and in keeping with our national principles and laws, we respect:

- Equal opportunity for all our people through democracy, effective governance, and fundamental freedoms;
- An open, just, sustainable**,** and inclusive rule-based global order;
- The importance of strengthened bilateral defense ties;
- The importance of adapting to and mitigating the impact of climate change through national, bilateral and multilateral efforts;
- The beneficial impact that sustainable, inclusive development will have on our two countries and the world;
- The centrality of economic policies that support the creation of strong and sustainable jobs**,** inclusive development, and rising incomes; and
- Transparent and rule-based markets that seek to drive the trade and investment

necessary to uplift all members of society and promote economic development.

As part of this Declaration of Friendship, we commit to:

- Hold regular Summits with increased periodicity;
- Elevate the Strategic Dialogue to a Strategic and Commercial Dialogue, of which the Strategic elements would continue to be chaired by the External Affairs Minister of India and the U.S. Secretary of State and the Commercial components of the Dialogue would be led by India's Minister of Trade and Commerce and the U.S. Secretary of Commerce. This reflects the United States' and India's commitment to strengthen commercial and economic ties to advance mutual prosperity, regional economic growth and stability;
- Establish secure hotlines between the Prime Minister of India and the President of the United States of America and National Security Advisors;
- Cooperate to develop joint ventures on strategically significant projects;
- Build meaningful security and effective counterterrorism cooperation;
- Hold regional and multilateral consultations;
- Consult and hold regular consultations in multilateral forums; and
- Leverage the talents and strengths of our people to enhance sustainable, inclusive development around the globe.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Joint Statement—United States-India Joint Strategic Vision for the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean Region

January 25, 2015

As the leaders of the world's two largest democracies that bridge the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean region and reflecting our agreement that a closer partnership between the United States and India is indispensable to promoting peace, prosperity and stability in those regions, we have agreed on a Joint Strategic Vision for the region.

India and the United States are important drivers of regional and global growth. From Africa to East Asia, we will build on our partnership to support sustainable, inclusive development, and increased regional connectivity by collaborating with other interested partners to address poverty and support broad-based prosperity.

To support regional economic integration, we will promote accelerated infrastructure connectivity and economic development in a manner that links South, Southeast and Central Asia, including by enhancing energy transmission and encouraging free trade and greater people-to-people linkages.

Regional prosperity depends on security. We affirm the importance of safeguarding maritime security and ensuring freedom of navigation and over flight throughout the region, especially in the South China Sea.

We call on all parties to avoid the threat or use of force and pursue resolution of territorial and maritime disputes through all peaceful means, in accordance with universally recognized principles of international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

We will oppose terrorism, piracy, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction within or from the region.

We will also work together to promote the shared values that have made our countries great, recognizing that our interests in peace, prosperity and stability are well served by our

common commitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

We commit to strengthening the East Asia Summit on its tenth anniversary to promote regional dialogue on key political and security issues, and to work together to strengthen it.

In order to achieve this regional vision, we will develop a roadmap that leverages our respective efforts to increase ties among Asian powers, enabling both our nations to better respond to diplomatic, economic and security challenges in the region.

As part of these efforts, the United States welcomes India's interest in joining the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation forum, as the Indian economy is a dynamic part of the Asian economy.

Over the next five years, we will strengthen our regional dialogues, invest in making trilateral consultations with third countries in the region more robust, deepen regional integration, strengthen regional forums, explore additional multilateral opportunities for engagement, and pursue areas where we can build capacity in the region that bolster long-term peace and prosperity for all.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Joint Statement by President Obama and Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India—Shared Effort, Progress for All

January 25, 2015

1. The President of the United States of America, Barack Obama, accompanied by First Lady Michelle Obama, is visiting India from 25–27 January 2015. The President of India and the Prime Minister of India welcomed the U.S. President as the Chief Guest at India's 66th Republic Day celebrations, the first U.S. President to grace this historic event.

2. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Barack Obama assessed the extensive bilateral strategic and global partnership between their two countries and pledged to continue to enhance cooperation across the spectrum of human endeavor to better their citizens' lives and that of the global community.

3. Noting that the multifaceted partnership between the United States and India is rooted in shared values of democracy and strong economic and people-to-people ties, President Obama and Prime Minister Modi elevated the bilateral relationship through their endorsement of a new India-U.S. Delhi Declaration of Friendship, which builds on their 30 September Vision Statement by articulating tangible principles to guide ongoing efforts to advance mutual prosperity, a clean and healthy environment, greater economic cooperation, regional peace, security and stability for the larger benefit of humankind.

4. Recognizing the important role that both countries play in promoting peace, prosperity, stability and security in the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean Region, and noting that India's "Act East Policy" and the United States' rebalance to Asia provide opportunities for India, the United States, and other Asia-Pacific countries to work closely to strengthen regional ties, the Leaders announced a Joint Strategic Vision to guide their engagement in the region.

5. The Prime Minister and the President acknowledged and expressed satisfaction at the qualitative reinvigoration of strategic ties and the intensity of substantive interactions since the Prime Minister's visit to Washington in September 2014. They appreciated the focused action and accomplishments by both sides on the decisions taken during the Summit in September and in this regard, they welcomed:

- The 30 September 2014 signing of an implementing agreement between the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) to conduct

the joint NASA–ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar (NISAR) mission.

- The convening of the Defence Policy Group and its subgroups on 28–29 October 2014 to pursue stronger and expanded bilateral defence cooperation.
- India's ongoing facilitation of U.S. Department of Defense humanitarian missions in India, including a mission in October and November 2014, to recover the remains of fallen U.S. soldiers who served in World War II.
- The signing of the India-U.S. Statement of Guiding Principles on Triangular Cooperation for Global Development on 3 November 2014, in furtherance of bilateral efforts to advance sustainable development in cooperation with partner countries around the world.
- The breakthrough between India and the United States on issues relating to the implementation of the Bali Ministerial Decisions regarding public stockholding for food security purposes, the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement, and post Bali work.
- Convening of the U.S.-India Joint Commission Meeting on Science and Technology Cooperation in New Delhi on 17 November 2014 to review, exchange views, and advance cooperation in diverse areas of science and technology and foster engagement in techno-entrepreneurship and innovation partnership for mutual benefit.
- Convening of the India-U.S. Higher Education Dialogue in New Delhi on 17 November 2014 to further bilateral cooperation in this field, strengthen partnerships between Indian and U.S. universities and community colleges, improve student and scholar mobility, and promote faculty collaboration.
- The signing of the MoU on 18 November 2014 between Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency Ltd. and the Export-Import Bank of the United States, which would make available up to $1 billion in financing to facilitate expanded cooperation and enhance U.S. private sector investment in Indian clean energy projects.
- Successful hosting of the bilateral India-U.S. Technology Summit on 18–19 November 2014 with the U.S. as a partner country for the first time.
- Convening of the High Technology Cooperation Group on 20–21 November 2014 to shape a cooperative agenda on high technology goods, including export control-related trade in homeland security technologies, high technology manufacturing equipment including machine tools, defence trade, and fostering collaboration in biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, medical devices, and health-related information technology.
- Convening of the Smart Cities Conclave on 22 November 2014 organised by the U.S.-India Business Council in cooperation with the Ministry of Urban Development and the Mayors and Commissioners of Ajmer (Rajasthan), Allahabad (Uttar Pradesh) and Vishakhapatnam (Andhra Pradesh) and the decision by the Government of India to constitute a high-level committee for each of the three Smart Cities comprising different departments of the Central Government, the state governments, local governments, and representatives of the U.S. industry.
- Signing of three MoUs between the State Governments of Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan and the U.S. Trade and Development Agency on 25 January 2015 to develop Vishakhapatnam, Allahabad, and Ajmer as Smart Cities with the participation of U.S. industry, in furtherance of the commitment made by the Leaders in September 2014.
- The convening of the Trade Policy Forum at the Ministerial level on 24–25

November 2014, in which India and the United States agreed to work towards resolving commercial impediments in both markets, to help realize the potential of bilateral trade in goods and services, and to promote investment and manufacturing.

- Convening of the India-U.S. Political Military Dialogue on 4 December 2014 to exchange perspectives on bilateral strategic and regional issues.
- Convening the sixth round of the India-U.S.-Japan trilateral discussions on 20 December 2014 to deepen regional engagement and to discuss ways to implement projects on the ground.
- The launch of the Infrastructure Collaboration Platform in New Delhi on 13 January 2015 to promote enhanced market access and financing to increase U.S. industry participation in the growth and development of sectors that support Indian infrastructure.
- The 12–15 January 2015 expert exchange on Counter-Improvised Explosive Device (C–IED) strategies and technologies and completion of a Joint Statement of Intent and a work plan for a programme of bilateral C–IED cooperation.
- The signing of a framework on and inauguration of the India-U.S. Investment Initiative in Washington on 12–15 January 2015 to jointly cooperate on facilitating capital market development conducive to financing investment; creating an environment that encourages investment in various sectors in India; and working to overcome any obstacles to such investment.
- The convening of the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Working Group in Washington on 14–15 January 2015 and the 23 January signing of the Joint Declaration of Intent to advance implementation of the Digital India programme and further bilateral commercial ICT cooperation.
- Launching of a Knowledge Partnership in defence studies expressing a shared desire to pursue collaborative activities between the United States and Indian National Defence Universities.
- Signing of the Statement of Cooperation for Supervisory Cooperation and Exchange of Supervisory Information between the Reserve Bank of India and Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), Federal Reserve System, and Office of the Comptroller of Currency (OCC).
- Convening of Indian and U.S. CEOs who are committed to deepening bilateral economic ties by identifying current impediments to trade and investment and working with the two government to find solutions; and identifying emerging sectors where public-private partnership can unlock new collaborations between our two peoples.
- The 13 January 2015 signing of the MoU between the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Ministry of Urban Development to enable USAID to share expertise, best practices, innovation and technologies in support of India's efforts to strengthen water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) in urban areas.
- India's recent introduction of visa-on-arrival for U.S. citizens and the convening of the first technical discussions to advance India's membership in the United States' Global Entry Program, initiatives aimed at easing travel between India and the United States to further strengthen people-to-people ties.
- Cooperation on scientific research collaboration on the Indian Monsoon Rainfall currently underway aboard the U.S. research vessel JOIDES Resolution in the Bay of Bengal.
- The conclusion of the first of two project annexes between the Indian Department of Atomic Energy–Department of Sci-

ence and Technology and the U.S. Department of Energy, which will enable discovery science cooperation in particle accelerator and high energy physics.

- The 22 January signing of the MoU between the U.S. Department of Treasury and India's Ministry of Finance to enhance cooperation to combat money laundering and the financing of terrorism.
- The Completion of an MoU between the Indian Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Department of Biotechnology, Indian Council of Medical Research, All Indian Institute of Medical Sciences, and the U.S National Institute of Health and National Cancer Institute.
- The 23 January signing of the Joint Declaration of Intent between USAID and the Ministry of Human Resource Development for technical support to the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), starting with IIT Gandhinagar, to strengthen research and entrepreneurship capabilities.
- The recent finalization of the 2015 Framework for the U.S.-India Defense Relationship, which will guide and expand the bilateral defence and strategic partnership over the next ten years.
- The 22 January signing of the India-U.S. Research, Development, Testing and Evaluation (RDT&E) Agreement to facilitate cooperation in defence research and development.
- Continuing bilateral engagement on the Defence Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI), including the 22 January 2015 agreement in principle to pursue co-production and co-development of four pathfinder projects, form a working group to explore aircraft carrier technology sharing and design, and explore possible cooperation on development of jet engine technology.

6. Prime Minister Modi and President Obama jointly appreciated the significant efforts undertaken by both sides in recent months to re-energize the strategic partnership, and affirmed expanding the substantive underpinnings of our diversified bilateral strategic partnership including through expanded strategic consultations, stronger defence, security, and economic cooperation.

7. President Obama also reiterated his support for Prime Minister Modi's vision to transform India, and recognized that India's focus on its development priorities presented substantial opportunities for forging stronger India-U.S. economic ties and greater people-to-people contacts. Reaffirming that India's rise is also in the interest of the United States, regional and global stability, and global economic growth, President Obama reiterated the United States' readiness to partner with India in this transformation. The two leaders pledged to translate their commitment of "Chalein Saath Saath": "Forward Together We Go" of September into action through "Sanjha Prayaas; Sab Ka Vikaas": "Shared Effort; Progress For All".

Economic Growth

8. Prime Minister Modi and President Obama expressed confidence that continued bilateral collaboration will increase opportunities for investment, improve bilateral trade and investment ties and lead to the creation of jobs and prosperity in both economies. In this regard, the Leaders agreed to continue to strengthen their broad-based partnership for development through stronger trade, technology, manufacturing, and investment linkages between the two countries and triangular cooperation with partner countries, and that continued efforts to maintain labor standards as per domestic law and agreed international norms will make these linkages more durable. The two sides also committed to continuing to cooperate on the finalization of the Post-Bali Work Programme in the spirit of the Doha mandate.

9. The President and the Prime Minister affirmed their shared commitment to facilitating

increased bilateral investment flows and fostering an open and predictable climate for investment. To this end, the Leaders instructed their officials to assess the prospects for moving forward with high-standard bilateral investment treaty discussions given their respective approaches.

10. The President and the Prime Minister also welcomed the fifth annual U.S.-India Economic and Financial Partnership Dialogue in February, in which the countries will deepen their dialogue on macroeconomic policy, financial sector regulation and development, infrastructure investment, tax policy, and efforts to combat money laundering and terrorist financing.

11. The two sides agreed to hold a discussion on the elements required in both countries to pursue an India-U.S. Totalisation Agreement.

12. President Obama commended Prime Minister Modi's "Jan Dhan" scheme to prioritize financial inclusion for India's poor. The Leaders noted India's intent to join the Better Than Cash Alliance.

13. The Leaders committed to explore areas of collaboration in skill development ranging from establishing quality assurance systems for skilling certification standards, setting up of skill development centres, nurturing and promoting social entrepreneurship and strengthening the innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem.

14. President Obama and Prime Minister Modi agreed to collaborate in the implementation of India's ambitious Digital India programme and expand commercial cooperation, including by encouraging investment engagement in the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) sector.

15. In recognition of the importance of their ongoing commercial discussions, the two sides agreed to hold public-private discussions in early 2015 under the aegis of the India-U.S. Commercial Dialogue for a period of two years, until March 2016, on mutually agreed areas of cooperation.

16. Recognizing the progress made in constructive engagement on Intellectual Property under the last round of the India-U.S. Trade Policy Forum held in November, 2014, the Leaders also looked forward to enhancing engagement on Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) in 2015 under the High Level Working Group on Intellectual Property, to the mutual benefit of both the countries.

17. Acknowledging the potential for technological cooperation in the rail sector in augmenting and optimizing India's rail infrastructure, the Leaders agreed to facilitate U.S. Trade and Development Agency and Indian Railways technical cooperation that will assist Indian Railways' efforts to modify its leasing and public-private partnership frameworks to attract private sector funding.

18. The Leaders recognized the robust public-private U.S.-India civil aviation partnership and agreed to continue working together to identify emerging technologies and build a larger commercial engagement agenda through key events such as the 2015 U.S.-India Aviation Summit and demonstration of advanced U.S. technologies.

19. Reaffirming their commitment to safety and security of civil aviation, the United States and India will continue consultations between the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the India Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) to ensure international safety standards set by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), with the aim of restoring Category I status at the earliest possible time.

20. Noting the importance of ongoing cooperation in higher education, the President and Prime Minister welcomed ongoing efforts to extend a knowledge partnership for supporting the Indian Institute of Technology at Gandhinagar through USAID. President Obama and Prime Minister Modi also pledged to collaborate through India's Global Initiative of Academic Networks (GIAN), to facilitate short-term teaching and research programs by up to 1000 visiting U.S. academics in Indian universities.

21. The Leaders emphasized the importance of strengthening international financial institutions, including the International Mone-

tary Fund. The President also affirmed his commitment to enhancing India's voice and vote in international Financial Institutions and ensuring that resources are made available and used creatively through multilateral development banks for infrastructure financing. Prime Minister Modi appreciated the efforts of the U.S. Treasury for cooperating with the Ministry of Finance on the Task Force on Resolution Corporation set up in pursuance of the recommendations of the Financial Sector Legislative Reforms Commission.

High Technology, Space and Health Cooperation

22. Prime Minister Modi and President Obama reaffirmed their commitment to ensure that partnerships in science, technology and innovation are a crucial component of the overall bilateral engagement in the 21st century. They also reaffirmed their support for the role that science, technology and innovation partnerships can play in addressing pressing challenges in areas such as food, water, energy, climate, and health and developing innovative solutions that are affordable, accessible and adaptable, meet the needs of the people of the two countries and benefit the global community. To this end, the Leaders agreed to continue to develop cooperative efforts in many areas of science, technology, and innovation, including studying the impacts of water, air pollution, sanitation and hygiene on human health and well-being.

23. The Leaders also agreed to continue U.S.-India collaboration in hydrology and water studies and monsoon modelling and noted the need to expeditiously work towards launching an Indo-U.S. Climate Fellowship to facilitate human capacity building. The Prime Minister and the President also reaffirmed the importance of ongoing efforts to strengthen women's participation in science, technology, engineering, and math through networking and mentoring programs.

24. The President and the Prime Minister welcome efforts, under the bilateral High Technology Cooperation Group, to seek timely resolution of the challenges to trade in High Technology goods, including the U.S. licensing requirements for trade in certain dual use items.

25. The Leaders reaffirmed the importance of providing transparent and predictable policy environments for fostering innovation. Both countries reiterated their interest in sharing information and best practices on IPR issues, and reaffirmed their commitment to stakeholders' consultations on policy matters concerning intellectual property protection.

26. President Obama and Prime Minister Modi agreed to further promote cooperative and commercial relations between India and the United States in the field of space. The leaders noted the on-going interactions between their space agencies, including towards realizing a dual frequency radar imaging satellite for Earth Sciences, and exploring possibilities for cooperation in studying Mars.

27. The Leaders took note of ongoing U.S.-India space cooperation, including the first face-to-face meeting of the ISRO–NASA Mars Working Group from 29–31 January 2015 in Bangalore, in which the two sides will consider opportunities for enhanced cooperation in Mars exploration, including potential coordinated observations and analysis between ISRO's Mars Orbiter Mission and NASA's Mars Atmosphere and Volatile EvolutioN mission (MAVEN). The Prime Minister and the President also welcomed continued progress toward enhanced space cooperation via the U.S.-India Civil Space Joint Working Group, which will meet later this year in India.

28. Under the umbrella of an implementing agreement between the U.S. Department of Energy and the Department of Atomic Energy of India, the Leaders welcomed expanded collaboration in basic physics research, and accelerator research and development.

29. The Leaders reaffirmed their commitment to the Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA) and announced specific actions at home and abroad to prevent the spread of infectious diseases, including a CDC-Ministry of Health Ebola and GHSA preparedness training, expansion of the India Epidemic Intelligence Service, and development of a roadmap

to achieve the objectives of the GHSA within three years.

30. The Leaders also committed to multi-sectoral actions countering the emergence and spread of antimicrobial resistance (AMR), and cooperation in training of health workers in preparedness for infectious disease threats. The Leaders agreed to focus science and technology partnerships on countering antibiotic resistant bacteria and promoting the availability, efficacy and quality of therapeutics.

31. The Leaders welcomed further progress in promoting bilateral cooperation on cancer research, prevention, control, and management and agreed to continue to strengthen the engagement between the CDC and India's National Centre for Disease Control.

32. The President and Prime Minister also welcomed the upcoming completion of an Environmental Health, Occupational Health and Injury Prevention and Control MoU between the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Indian Council for Medical Research to further collaborative efforts to improve the health and welfare of both countries' citizens.

33. The Prime Minister and the President also agreed to expand the India-U.S. Health Initiative into a Healthcare Dialogue with relevant stakeholders to further strengthen bilateral collaboration in health sectors including through capacity building initiatives and by exploring new areas, including affordable healthcare, cost saving mechanisms, distribution barriers, patent quality, health services information technology, and complementary and traditional medicine. The President and the Prime Minister pledged to encourage dialogue between the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and its Indian counterparts on traditional medicine. The Leaders also pledged to strengthen collaboration, dialogue, and cooperation between the regulatory authorities of the two countries to ensure safety, efficacy, and quality of pharmaceuticals, including generic medicines.

34. The Leaders also agreed to accelerate joint leadership of the global Call to Action to end preventable deaths among mothers and children through a third meeting of the 24 participating countries in India in June 2015. As host, India will showcase the power of new partnerships, innovations and systems to more effectively deliver life-saving interventions. They also lauded the highly successful collaboration on a locally produced vaccine against rotavirus which will save the lives of an estimated 80,000 children each year in India alone, and pledged to strengthen the cooperation in health research and capacity building through a new phase of the India-U.S. Vaccine Action Programme.

Defence and Homeland Security Cooperation

35. Prime Minister Modi and President Obama welcomed the efforts made by both sides to expand bilateral defence cooperation in areas of mutual interest and reaffirmed their commitment to continue to work towards deepening the bilateral defence relationship. The Leaders acknowledged bilateral military ties as the foundation of the defense relationship and encouraged their respective militaries to pursue additional opportunities for engagement through exercises, military personnel exchanges, and defense dialogues.

36. The Leaders also acknowledged the need for the two-way defence engagement to include technology cooperation and collaboration, co-production and co-development. To this end, the President and the Prime Minister emphasized the ongoing importance of the Defence Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI) in developing new areas of technology cooperation in the defence sector including through co-development and co-production and the Prime Minister welcomed the U.S. Defense Department's establishment of a dedicated rapid reaction team focused exclusively on advancing DTTI. The Leaders expressed confidence that continued DTTI collaboration will yield additional joint projects in the near future.

37. The President also welcomed the Prime Minister's initiatives to liberalize the Foreign Direct Investment Policy regime in the defence sector and the Leaders agreed to cooperate on India's efforts to establish a defence in-

dustrial base in India, including through initiatives like "Make in India."

38. Prime Minister Modi and President Obama expressed satisfaction over the efforts made by both countries to deepen cooperation in the field of maritime security, as reflected in the 2015 Framework for the U.S.-India Defense Relationship. To this end, they agreed that the navies of both sides would continue discussions to identify specific areas for expanding maritime cooperation. They also reiterated their commitment to upgrading their bilateral naval exercise MALABAR.

39. The two sides also noted the growing cooperation between their law enforcement agencies, particularly in the areas of extradition and mutual legal assistance, to counter transnational criminal threats such as terrorism, narcotics, trafficking, financial and economic fraud, cybercrime, and transnational organized crime and pledged to enhance such cooperation further. The President and the Prime Minister also noted the serious risks to national and economic security from malicious cyber activity and agreed to cooperate on enhancing operational sharing of cyber threat information, examining how international law applies in cyberspace, and working together to build agreement on norms of responsible state behavior.

40. The Leaders committed to undertake efforts to make the U.S.-India partnership a defining counterterrorism relationship for the 21st Century by deepening collaboration to combat the full spectrum of terrorist threats and keep their respective homelands and citizens safe from attacks. The Leaders reiterated their strong condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations with "zero tolerance" and reaffirmed their deep concern over the continued threat posed by transnational terrorism including by groups like Al Qaida and the ISIL, and called for eliminating terrorist safe havens and infrastructure, disrupting terrorist networks and their financing, and stopping cross-border movement of terrorists.

41. The Leaders reaffirmed the need for joint and concerted efforts to disrupt entities such as Lashkar-e-Tayyiba, Jaish-e-Mohammad, D Company and the Haqqani Network, and agreed to continue ongoing efforts through the Homeland Security Dialogue as well as the next round of the U.S.-India Joint Working Group on Counter Terrorism in late 2015 to develop actionable elements of bilateral engagement. The two sides noted the recent U.S. sanctions against three D Company affiliates. The President and the Prime Minister further agreed to continue to work toward an agreement to share information on known and suspected terrorists. They also agreed to enter discussions to deepen collaboration on UN terrorist designations, and reiterated their call for Pakistan to bring the perpetrators of the November 2008 terrorist attack in Mumbai to justice.

42. The President and the Prime Minister also noted the positive cooperative engagement between the Indian and the U.S. authorities with a view to working together to counter the threat of IEDs and to develop counterterrorism best practices.

Energy and Climate Change

43. Noting that the Contact Group set up in September 2014 to advance implementation of bilateral civil nuclear cooperation has met three times in December and January, the Leaders welcomed the understandings reached on the issues of civil nuclear liability and administrative arrangements for civil nuclear cooperation, and looked forward to U.S.-built nuclear reactors contributing to India's energy security at the earliest.

Clean Energy Goal and Cooperation

44. President Obama and Prime Minister Modi emphasized the critical importance of expanding clean energy research, development, manufacturing and deployment, which increases energy access and reduces greenhouse gas emissions. The leaders announced actions to advance India's transition to low carbon economy. India intends to increase the share of use of renewable in electricity generation consistent with its intended goal to increase India's solar target to 100 gigawatts by

2022. The United States intends to support India's goal by enhancing cooperation on clean energy and climate change, to include:

i. Expanding Partnership to Advance Clean Energy Research (PACE–R): A renewed commitment to PACE–R, including extending funding for three existing research tracks of solar energy, building energy efficiency, and biofuels for an additional five years and launching a new track on smart grid and grid storage.

ii. Expanding Partnership to Advance Clean Energy Deployment (PACE–D): Both the countries intended to expand our current Partnership to Advance Clean Energy Deployment (PACE–D) through increased bilateral engagements and further joint initiatives to expand cooperation in support of India's ambitious targets in renewable energy.

iii. Accelerating Clean Energy Finance: Prime Minister Modi emphasized India's ongoing efforts to create a market environment that will promote trade and investment in this sector. President Obama welcomed India's ambitious solar energy goals and encouraged India to continue its efforts to increase trade and private investment in this sector. President Obama conveyed the potential availability of U.S. Government official financing in this area, consistent with its policies, to support private sector involvement for those entities in contributing to India's clean energy requirements.

iv. Launching Air Quality Cooperation: Implementing EPA's AIR Now-International Program and megacities partnerships, focused on disseminating information to help the urban dwellers to reduce their exposure to harmful levels of air pollution, and enable urban policy planners to implement corrective strategies for improving Ambient Air Quality in the cities keeping in view health and climate change co-benefits of these strategies.

v. Initiating Climate Resilience Tool Development: Jointly undertaking a partnership on climate resilience that will work to downscale international climate models for the Indian sub-continent to much higher resolution than currently available, assess climate risks at the sub-national level, work with local technical institutes on capacity building, and engage local decision-makers in the process of addressing climate information needs and informing planning and climate resilient sustainable development, including for India's State Action Plans.

vi. Demonstrating Clean Energy and Climate Initiatives on the Ground: Additional pilot programs and other collaborative projects in the areas of space cooling, super-efficient appliances, renewable energy storage, and smart grids.

vii. Concluding MOU on Energy Security, Clean Energy and Climate Change: Both countries concluded negotiations on a five year MOU to carry this work forward, to be signed as early as possible at a mutually agreed upon date.

Climate Change

45. The United States of America and the Republic of India recognize that global climate change is a profound threat to humanity and to the imperatives of sustainable development, growth and the eradication of poverty. President Obama and Prime Minister Modi share a deep concern regarding the climate challenge and understand that meeting it will require concerted action by their countries and the international community. They stressed the importance of enhancing their bilateral cooperation on adaptation measures, as well as joint research and development and technology innovation, adoption and diffusion for clean energy and efficiency solutions that will help achieve the goals of transitioning to a climate resilient and low carbon economy. They also stressed the importance of working together and with other countries to conclude an ambitious climate agreement in Paris in 2015. To this end,

they plan to cooperate closely over the next year to achieve a successful agreement in Paris. The President and Prime Minister reaffirmed their prior understanding from September 2014 concerning the phase down of HFCs and agreed to cooperate on making concrete progress in the Montreal Protocol this year.

Global Issues and Regional Consultations

46. The Leaders agreed to expand their efforts to assist other developing countries and address global development challenges for the benefit of the wider region and the world and they lauded ongoing triangular assistance, which may involve U.S.-India collaboration to address development challenges in third countries in areas including health, energy, food security, disaster management, and women's empowerment. The two sides noted that this collaboration, which is active with Afghanistan, East and West Africa, may be expanded to additional third countries.

47. Further underscoring the importance of implementing infrastructure projects to enhance connectivity and enable freer flow of commerce and energy in the region, the Leaders agreed to develop additional areas in which both sides could work together, including on India's initiatives to enhance its connectivity with the South and South East Asian region. The President and the Prime Minister also stressed the importance of the economic and transport connectivity between Central and South Asia and the need to promote a secure, stable, and prosperous Afghanistan as part of a secure, stable, and prosperous region. Reaffirming the importance of their strategic partnerships with Afghanistan, the Leaders asserted the importance of a sustainable, inclusive, sovereign, and democratic political order in Afghanistan and they agreed to convene further high-level consultations on Afghanistan in the near future.

48. The President and the Prime Minister also welcomed the role of the leaders-led East Asia Summit (EAS) process in promoting open, balanced and inclusive security architecture in the region. Noting the discussions in the sixth round of the India-US-Japan Trilateral Dialogue, the President and the Prime Minister underlined the importance of the cooperation between the three countries through identification of projects of common interest and their early implementation, and they decided to explore holding the dialogue among their Foreign Ministers.

49. The President and Prime Minister pledged to strengthen their efforts to forge a partnership to lead global efforts for non-proliferation of WMDs, to reduce the salience of nuclear weapons in international affairs, and to promote universal, verifiable and non-discriminatory global nuclear disarmament. They supported negotiations on a fissile material cut-off Treaty on the basis of the Shannon Mandate in the Conference on Disarmament.

50. As active participants in the Nuclear Security Summit process, the United States and India welcomed progress towards reducing the risk of terrorists acquiring nuclear weapons or related materials, and noted their shared commitment to improving nuclear security nationally and globally. The Prime Minister welcomed the hosting of the 2016 Nuclear Security Summit by the United States. President Obama and Prime Minister Modi also welcomed the recent convening of the first bilateral nuclear security best practices exchange, under the auspices of the Global Center for Nuclear Energy Partnership, as an example of their cooperation on nuclear security.

51. In a further effort to strengthen global nonproliferation and export control regimes, the President and the Prime Minister committed to continue to work towards India's phased entry into the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), the Wassenaar Arrangement, and the Australia Group. The President reaffirmed the United States' position that India meets MTCR requirements and is ready for NSG membership and that it supports India's early application and eventual membership in all four regimes.

52. The Leaders expressed concern over the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (DPRK) nuclear and ballistic missile programmes, including its uranium enrichment

activity. They urged the DPRK to take concrete steps toward denuclearization, as well as to comply fully with its international obligations, including relevant UN Security Council Resolutions, and to fulfill its commitments under the 2005 Joint Statement of the Six-Party talks.

53. The Leaders welcomed recent progress and noted the criticality of Iran taking steps to verifiably assure the international community of the exclusively peaceful nature of its nuclear programme, and agreed that this is an historic opportunity for Iran to resolve outstanding concerns related to its nuclear programme.

54. Highlighting the United States' and India's shared democratic values and recognizing the important role of women in their societies, the Leaders looked forward to reconvening the Women Empowerment Dialogue as early as possible and reasserted their zero tolerance for violence against women. The Leaders also looked forward to the reconvening of the Global Issues Forum.

55. The President and the Prime Minister also reaffirmed their commitment to consult closely on global crises, including in Iraq and Syria. The Leaders agreed to exchange information on individuals returning from these conflict zones and to continue to cooperate in protecting and responding to the needs of civilians caught up in these conflicts.

56. President Obama reaffirmed his support for a reformed UN Security Council with India as a permanent member, and both leaders committed to ensuring that the Security Council continues to play an effective role in maintaining international peace and security as envisioned in the United Nations Charter. They also committed to accelerate their peacekeeping capacity-building efforts in third countries.

57. Both sides also acknowledged that the Internet was a central element of the information society and a powerful enabler of global economic and social progress. Both sides also noted that the growth of the Internet in the coming decade would be from developing countries, of which India would be a significant contributor, especially in the context of its "Digital India" programme.

58. The Leaders recognized that a digital divide persists between and within countries in terms of the availability, affordability and use of information and communications technologies, and they stressed the need to continue to bridge that divide, to ensure that the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications technologies for development, are available to all people, including the poorest of the poor.

59. President Obama thanked Prime Minister Modi and the people of India for the extraordinary hospitality extended to him on his second presidential visit to India, and he congratulated the nation on the celebration of its 66th Republic Day. The Leaders reflected proudly on recent achievements and looked forward to continuing to work together to build a U.S.-India partnership that is transformative for their two peoples and for the world.

NOTE: This joint statement referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization. An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Remarks at a State Dinner Hosted by President Pranab Mukherjee of India in New Delhi, India
January 25, 2015

Good evening. President Mukherjee, Prime Minister Modi, distinguished guests: On behalf of Michelle and myself, I want to extend our deepest thanks for the extraordinary hospitality that you've shown us here today. We feel your friendship, your *dosti.* And I am deeply honored to be the first American President to join you in celebrating India's Republic Day.

I also want to thank you for not making me dance again. [*Laughter*] The last time we were

here, we joined some children in Mumbai for Diwali, and we danced. It was pretty clear what the Indian press thought. One headline said, "President Obama Visits India." The other said, "Michelle Obama Rocks India." [*Laughter*] It is true, Michelle is a better dancer than me.

Let me also thank my partner and friend, Prime Minister Modi. I've often said that my life story could only happen in America. But of course, Mr. Prime Minister, your story could only happen in India. Here this evening, we think back to all those years ago, to your father selling tea in the train station and your mother working at other families' homes to support her own. And tonight their son welcomes us as the Prime Minister of the world's largest democracy.

Now, we all know about the Prime Minister's legendary work ethic. He was explaining to me today how he only needed 3 hours' sleep, which made me feel bad. I thought, I was doing okay with 5. [*Laughter*] What I didn't know until now is that he once survived an attack by a crocodile. So he's tough. And he also has style. One of our newspapers back home wrote: "Move aside, Michelle Obama. The world has a new fashion icon." [*Laughter*] Tonight I was thinking about wearing a Modi kurta myself. And while I do not want to use a dinner like this to make United States policy, let me just say that given the Prime Minister's advocacy at the United Nations, Michelle and I are looking forward to the first International Yoga Day.

Our visit reflects the deepest connections and long friendship between our peoples. One of America's greatest poets was Walt Whitman, and more than a century ago he wrote a poem, "Passage to India," in which he celebrated the technological ingenuity and human spirit that joins our nations. He wrote: "Seest thou not God's purpose from the first? The earth to be spann'd, connected by network, the people to become brothers and sisters." Here, in our time, these words have come to pass.

India and America have spanned the Earth, connected and networked by technology and by family, including millions of Indian Americans, among them our Nation's first Indian American Ambassador to India, Rich Verma. And in the shared work of our world, our purpose—lifting up our fellow citizens, advancing human dignity—we, as the poet predicted, have become brothers and sisters.

Tomorrow we will celebrate Republic Day. We will honor the generations of Indians who built this nation through toil and tears and iron will. And at the end of the day, I'm told the band will play that hymn that was dear to the heart of Mahatma Gandhi:

> Abide with me; fast falls the eventide;
> The darkness deepens; Lord with me abide.
> When other helpers fail and comforts flee,
> Help of the helpless, O abide with me.

And so I propose a toast, if I can get a glass—ah, here we go. To the great partnership between our nations and the friendship—the *dosti*—between our peoples. Here in the eventide, Indians and Americans, let us know, in the darkness or day, in good times or bad, whenever one of us looks to the other, we will surely say, abide with me.

Cheers!

[*At this point, President Obama offered a toast.*]

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:37 p.m. at the Rashtrapati Bhavan. In his remarks, he referred to Heeraben Modi, mother of Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India.

Remarks at the United States-India Business Council Summit in New Delhi, India

January 26, 2015

Good evening. Thank you so much, Madam Minister, for not only the introduction, but for the work that you're doing every day to bring our two countries closer together. Thank you all for the very warm welcome. I was proud to speak to the U.S.-India Business Council in

Mumbai on my last visit to India. And it's good to be with you again. I thank you, CII, FICCI, and the Government of India for hosting us.

Now, I'm pleased to be joined on this visit by leaders from my administration who are dedicated to expanding the trade and investment between our two countries, and I just want to mention them briefly: Our Secretary of Commerce, Penny Pritzker; the Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development, Raj Shah; the President and CEO of our Overseas Private Investment Corporation, Elizabeth Littlefield; and the Director of the U.S. Trade and Development Agency, Lee Zak.

Prime Minister Modi, I want to thank you again, both for your invitation to join you on this incredible Republic Day and the wonderful hospitality that you've shown me over the past 2 days. Today's ceremonies and parade were truly spectacular. It was a moving tribute to India's founding, its democracy, its progress. After all those hours in the reviewing stand together, I figured that the President—the Prime Minister might be tired of me by now. But what's another speech between friends? [*Laughter*] I will not, by the way, ride a motorcycle today—[*laughter*]—after watching those incredible acrobats.

As I said yesterday, even as this visit is rich with symbolism, it's also a visit of great substance. We're advancing the vision that I laid out on my last visit: India and the United States as true global partners. And a core element of this vision is greater trade, investment, and economic partnership. Our two business communities—all of you—have some—have been some of the strongest champions for a closer relationship, and I want to thank you for your commitment. You understand better than anybody that in our globalized world, the fortunes of the United States and the fortunes of India are inextricably linked. We can grow and we can prosper together and establish a set of global norms in terms of how business is done that will benefit not just our two countries, but people around the world. And when I spoke to you on my last visit, I pledged to broaden and deepen our economic ties, and that's what we've done.

In the last few years, we've increased trade between our countries by some 60 percent. Today, it's nearly a hundred billion dollars a year, which is a record high. And this is a win-win. It's a win for America and our workers because U.S. exports to India are up nearly 35 percent, and those exports support about 170,000 well-paying American jobs. At the same time, Indian investment in our country is growing as well. And those Indian investments are supporting jobs across America. We've got high-tech jobs in Upstate New York, manufacturing jobs in North Carolina, engineering jobs in places like Michigan and Ohio.

And our growing trade is a win for India, because increased U.S. exports and investment here mean more American-made planes flying passengers on India's airlines all over the world, more American-made turbines generating the energy India needs to continue with its growth, more American-made machinery upgrading India's infrastructure. And because we've made it easier for foreign companies to sell and invest in America, India's exports to the United States are also increasing, and that means more jobs and opportunities here in India. In the end, that's the purpose of trade and investment: to deliver a better life for our people. And both Indian and American workers are and can benefit even more in the future from close ties between our two countries.

So we're moving in the right direction. I want to thank everybody here for the progress that we've achieved together. Now, that said, we all know that the U.S.-India economic relationship is also defined by so much untapped potential. Of all America's imports from the world, about 2 percent come from India. Of all of America's exports to the world, just over 1 percent go to India. One percent to over a billion people. We do about $100 billion a year in trade with India, which is a great improvement since I took office. But we do about $560 billion a year with China. And that gives you some sense of the potential both for the kind of growth that India might unleash and the potential for greater trade between our two coun-

tries. So I think everybody here will agree, we've got to do better. I know Prime Minister Modi agrees, and he just shared his expansive vision on this issue with you.

As we announced yesterday, we've taken a number of concrete steps forward on this visit. New breakthroughs will help us overcome some key issues and move us toward fully implementing our civil nuclear agreement. We've taken another big step forward in our defense cooperation with a new technology and trade initiative so that Indian and American companies can jointly develop and produce new defense technologies. We've agreed to resume discussions that would move us toward a bilateral investment treaty that would facilitate Indian businesses making more investments in the United States and U.S. businesses making more investments here in India.

And we've agreed to step up our efforts with a new high-level U.S.-India Strategic and Commercial Dialogue to make sure we're taking concrete steps that build on our progress so that when two leaders share a vision and make agreements, we know that our agencies, our bureaucracies will follow through aggressively and we can hold them accountable. And President Modi—Prime Minister Modi, I want to thank you for your personal commitment to helping us advance all of these efforts.

Today I'm proud to announce additional steps: a series of U.S. initiatives that will generate more than $4 billion in trade and investment with India and support thousands of jobs in both of our countries. Specifically, over the next 2 years, our Export-Import Bank will commit up to $1 billion in financing to support "Made in America" exports to India. And OPIC will support lending to small and medium businesses across India that we anticipate will ultimately result in more than $1 billion in loans in underserved rural and urban markets. And our U.S. Trade and Development Agency will aim to leverage nearly $2 billion in investments in renewable energy in India.

So we're moving forward. There's new momentum, there's new energy, new hope that we can finally begin to realize the full potential of our economic relationship. And I want to close by suggesting several specific areas where we need to focus.

First, we have to keep working to make it easier to do business together in both our countries. For the past 2 years, business leaders like you have voted America as the best place in the world to invest. I'm pretty happy about that. [*Laughter*] And we're going to keep working through what we've called SelectUSA, an initiative to cut redtape, streamline regulations so that even more companies like yours—from India and around the world—come and set up shop in America.

Now, here in India, as the Prime Minister just discussed, there are still too many barriers—hoops to jump through, bureaucratic restrictions—that make it hard to start a business or to export, to import, to close a deal, deliver on a deal. We hear this consistently from business leaders like you. And right before coming out here, the Prime Minister and I joined some of you in a roundtable where you described some of the challenges that you face.

Prime Minister Modi has initiated reforms that will help overcome some of these barriers, including a new government committee dedicated to fast-tracking American investment. And we enthusiastically support these efforts. We need to be incentivizing trade and investment, not stifling it. We need to be fostering a business environment that's more transparent and more consistent and more predictable. In knowledge-based economies, entrepreneurs and innovators need to feel confident that their hard work and, in particular, their intellectual property will be protected.

Second, we can work together to develop new technologies that help India leap forward. And I know I speak for the American companies represented here when they say they're ready to partner with Indian firms to build next-generation trains that run on cleaner energy and that—and to lay the new railways India needs for the future. They're ready to help upgrade roads and ports and airports to make it easier for Indians to connect with each other and with the world. They're ready to install broadband connections to give communities reliable access to the Internet and to help

build the smart cities that Prime Minister Modi has called for. And on this visit, we've paved the way to mobilize American expertise and investment in three of these cities. And we'll send two trade missions to India this year focused specifically on upgrading India's infrastructure.

And finally—and I know this is something that is of great concern to Prime Minister Modi and it's of great concern to me and the United States—we need to make sure that economic growth in both our countries is inclusive and sustained. India's astonishing growth in recent decades has lifted countless millions out of poverty and created one of the world's largest middle classes. There's an important lesson in that. Growth cannot just be measured by the aggregate. It can't just be measured by GDP. It can't just be measured by the bottom line on a balance sheet. Growth, in the end, has to make people's lives better in real, tangible, and lasting ways.

Prime Minister Modi has laid out an ambitious vision for the future that lifts up India and its people. And I know that the Prime Minister has even taken to sweeping the street himself and that CEOs are following his lead. We might have to try that in the United States. [*Laughter*] The United States is ready to work with you to help every home and business in India have reliable access to electricity so more families can share in India's progress.

And as we announced yesterday, we want to support India's goal of expanding solar energy, help improve air quality in India's cities, and expand access to clean water. There's good business sense, by the way, in being environmentally sound. And one of the great potentials for India and one of the necessities for the world is that we find ways to lift people out of poverty and provide them power in ways that are sustainable and allow you to leapfrog over some of the dirty development strategies of the past directly into the clean strategies of the future.

As you work to give every Indian household a bank account, American companies are ready to help to make sure these accounts can help Indians in their day-to-day lives, by digitalizing retail transactions. As we grow, we have to do it responsibly and stay true to our values and uphold basic standards and rule of law. We have to keep striving to protect the rights of our workers, to make sure that our supply chains are sourced responsibly.

Today I'm also proud to announce a new public-private partnership to help millions of proud Indian Americans directly invest in India's future. Our new Indian Diaspora Investment Initiative will allow folks back home to generate a new stream of financing for Indian businesses that are investing in nontraditional—and too often overlooked—markets, whether it's providing health care to rural communities or improving water and sanitation, to opening up some of those new bank accounts.

And this can be another spark in India's economic engine. I know from talking with so many Indian Americans that they are very excited about this opportunity. They're ready to do even more to help unleash India's success. And it's just one more example of how much we can achieve, how much more good we can do if we keep working together, as governments and as business and as citizens.

Let's make it possible for a young woman in a rural village to start a business with a partner in America that will change both their lives. Let's encourage young scientists at American universities to collaborate with partners in India to develop new technologies that will reduce our dependence on fossil fuels and protect our planet. Let's make it easier for Indians and Americans to work together across the board—to buy from one another, to invest in one another, to create with one another—and in doing so, lift the fortunes of all of us. That's the future I believe in for our countries. And that's the future I know we can achieve, if we're willing to work for it together.

I know the Prime Minister has expressed his commitment. You have the commitment of the President of the United States and my administration. I'm looking forward to working with all

of you. The next time I come to India, I expect we will have made more progress. All right?

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:24 p.m. at the Taj Palace hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Minister of State for Commerce and Industry Nirmala Sitharaman of India. He also referred to the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII); and the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI).

Remarks at the Siri Fort Auditorium in New Delhi, India
January 27, 2015

Namaste! Thank you so much. Thank you so much, Neha, for—what a wonderful introduction. Everybody, please have a seat. Nothing fills me with more hope than when I hear incredible young people like Neha and all the outstanding work that she's doing on behalf of India's youth and for representing this nation's energy and its optimism and its idealism. She makes me very, very proud. And I'm sure—I think that may be her—is that somebody related to you? Okay. Because I—we just had a chance to meet, and she's beaming with pride right now sitting next to you. Give Neha a big round of applause once again.

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, to all the students and young people who are here today, to the people of India watching and listening across this vast nation, I bring the friendship and the greetings of the American people. On behalf of myself and Michelle, thank you so much for welcoming us back to India. *Bahoot dhanyavad.*

It has been a great honor to be the first American President to join you for Republic Day. With the tricolor waving above us, we celebrated the strength of your Constitution. We paid tribute to India's fallen heroes. In yesterday's parade, we saw the pride and the diversity of this nation, including the Dare Devils on their Royal Enfields, which was very impressive. Secret Service does not let me ride motorcycles. [*Laughter*] Especially not on my head. [*Laughter*]

I realize that the sight of an American President as your chief guest on Republic Day would have once seemed unimaginable. But my visit reflects the possibilities of a new moment. As I've said many times, I believe that the relationship between India and the United States can be one of the defining partnerships of the century. When I spoke to your Parliament on my last visit, I laid out my vision for how our two nations can build that partnership. And today I want to speak directly to you, the people of India, about what I believe we can achieve together and how we can do it.

My commitment to a new chapter between our countries flows from the deep friendship between our people. And Michelle and I have felt it ourselves. I recognized India with the first state visit of my Presidency, where we also danced to some pretty good Bhangra. [*Laughter*] For the first time, we brought Diwali to the White House. On our last celebration here, we celebrated the Festival of Lights in Mumbai. We danced with some children. Unfortunately, we were not able to schedule any dancing this visit. *Senorita, bade-bade deshon mein*. You know what I mean. So—[*laughter*]. Everybody said, by the way, how much better a dancer Michelle was than me—[*laughter*]—which hurt my feelings a little bit. [*Laughter*]

On a more personal level, India represents an intersection of two men who have always inspired me. When Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was protesting racial segregation in the United States, he said that his guiding light was Mahatma Gandhi. When Dr. King came to India, he said that being here, in "Gandhi's land," reaffirmed his conviction that in the struggle for justice and human dignity, the most potent weapon of all is nonviolent resistance. And those two great souls are why we can gather here together today, Indians and Americans, equal and free.

And there is another link that binds us. More than a hundred years ago, America welcomed a son of India, Swami Vivekananda.

And Swami Vivekananda, he helped bring Hinduism and yoga to our country. And he came to my hometown of Chicago. And there, at a great gathering of religious leaders, he spoke of his faith and the divinity in every soul and the purity of love. And he began his speech with a simple greeting: "Sisters and brothers of America."

So today let me say: Sisters and brothers of India, my confidence in what our nations can achieve together is rooted in the values we share. For we may have our different histories and speak different languages, but when we look at each other, we see a reflection of ourselves.

Having thrown off colonialism, we created constitutions that began with the three same words: "We the people." As societies that celebrate knowledge and innovation, we transformed ourselves into high-tech hubs of the global economy. Together, we unlock new discoveries, from the particles of creation to outer space, and we are among the few nations to have gone to both the Moon and to Mars. And here in India, this dynamism has resulted in a stunning achievement. You've lifted countless millions from poverty and built one of the world's largest middle classes.

And nobody embodies this progress and this sense of possibility more than our young people. Empowered by technology, you are connecting and collaborating like never before: on Facebook and WhatsApp and Twitter. And chances are, you're talking to someone in America, your friends or your cousins. The United States has the largest Indian diaspora in the world, including some 3 million proud Indian Americans. And they make America stronger, and they tie us together, bonds of family and friendship that allow us to share in each other's success.

So for all these reasons, India and the United States are not just natural partners. I believe America can be India's best partner. I believe that. Of course, only Indians can decide India's role in the world. But I'm here because I'm absolutely convinced that both our peoples will have more jobs and opportunity and our nations will be more secure and the world will be safer and a more just place when our two democracies—the world's largest democracy and the world's oldest democracy—stand together. I believe that.

So here in New Delhi, Prime Minister Modi and I have begun this work anew. And here's what I think we can do together. America wants to be your partner as you lift up the lives of the Indian people and provide greater opportunity. So working together, we're giving farmers new techniques and data—from our satellites to their cell phones—to increase yields and boost incomes. We're joining you in your effort to empower every Indian with a bank account.

And with the breakthroughs we achieved on this visit, we can finally move toward fully implementing our civil nuclear agreement, which will mean more reliable electricity for Indians and cleaner, noncarbon energy that helps fight climate change. And I don't have to describe for you what more electricity means: students being able to study at night, businesses being able to stay open longer and hire more workers, farmers being able to use mechanized tools that increase their productivity, whole communities seeing more prosperity. In recent years, India has lifted more people out of poverty than any other country. And now we have a historic opportunity, with India leading the way to end the injustice of extreme poverty all around the world.

America wants to be your partner as you protect the health of your people and the beauty of this land, from the backwaters of Kerala to the banks of Ganges. As we deliver more energy, more electricity, let's do it with clean, renewable energy, like solar and wind. And let's put cleaner vehicles on the road and more filtration systems on farms and villages. Because every child should be able to drink clean water, and every child should be able to breathe clean air. We need our young people healthy for their futures. And we can do it. We have the technology to do it.

America wants to be your partner in igniting the next wave of Indian growth. As India pursues more trade and investment, we want to be first in line. We're ready to join you in building

new infrastructure: the roads and the airports, the ports, the bullet trains to propel India into the future. We're ready to help design smart cities that serve citizens better, and we want to develop more advanced technologies with India, as we do with our closest allies.

We believe we can be even closer partners in ensuring our mutual security. And both our nations have known the anguish of terrorism, and we stand united in the defense of our people. And now we're deepening our defense cooperation against new challenges. The United States welcomes a greater role for India in the Asia-Pacific, where the freedom of navigation must be upheld and disputes must be resolved peacefully. And even as we acknowledge the world as it is, we must never stop working for the world as it should be: a world without nuclear weapons. That should be a goal for all of us.

I believe that if we're going to be true global partners, then our two nations must do more around the world together. So to ensure international security and peace, multilateral institutions created in the 20th century have to be updated for the 21st. And that's why I support a reformed United Nations Security Council that includes India as a permanent member.

Of course, as I've said before, with power comes responsibility. In this region, India can play a positive role in helping countries forge a better future, from Burma to Sri Lanka, where today, there's new hope for democracy. With your experience in elections, you can help other countries with theirs. With your expertise in science and medicine, India can do more around the world to fight disease and develop new vaccines and help us end the moral outrage of even a single child dying from a preventable disease. Together, we can stand up against human trafficking and work to end the scourge of modern day slavery.

And being global partners means confronting the urgent global challenge of climate change. With rising seas, melting Himalayan glaciers, more unpredictable monsoons, cyclones getting stronger, few countries will be more affected by a warmer planet than India. Now, the United States recognizes our part in creating this problem, so we're leading the global effort to combat it. And today I can say that America's carbon pollution is near its lowest level in almost two decades.

I know the argument made by some that it's unfair for countries like the United States to ask developing nations and emerging economies like India to reduce your dependence on the same fossil fuels that helped power our growth for more than a century. But here's the truth: Even if countries like the United States curb our emissions, if countries that are growing rapidly like India—with soaring energy needs—don't also embrace cleaner fuels, then we don't stand a chance against climate change.

So we welcome India's ambitious targets for generating more clean energy. We'll continue to help India deal with the impacts of climate change, because you shouldn't have to bear that burden alone. And as we keep working for a strong global agreement on climate change, it's young people like you who have to speak up so we can protect this planet for your generation. I'll be gone when the worst effects happen. It's your generation and your children that are going to be impacted. And that's why it's urgent that we begin this work right now.

Development that lifts up the lives and health of our people, trade and economic partnerships that reduce poverty and create opportunity, leadership in the world that defends our security and advances human dignity and protects our planet—that's what I believe India and America can do together. So with the rest of my time, I want to discuss how we can do it. Because in big and diverse societies like ours, progress ultimately depends on something more basic, and that is, how we see each other. And we know from experience what makes nations strong. And Neha, I think, did a great job of describing the essence of what's important here.

We are strongest when we see the inherent dignity in every human being. Look at our countries, the incredible diversity even here in this hall. India is defined by countless languages and dialects and every color and caste and creed, gender and orientations. And likewise, in America, we're Black and White and Latino

and Asian and Indian American and Native American. Your Constitution begins with the pledge to uphold "the dignity of the individual." And our Declaration of Independence proclaims that "all men are created equal."

In both our countries, generations have worked to live up to these ideals. When he came to India, Martin Luther King, Jr., was introduced to some schoolchildren as a "fellow untouchable." My grandfather was a cook for the British Army in Kenya. The distant branches of Michelle's family tree include both slaves and slave owners. When we were born, people who looked like us still couldn't vote in some parts of the country. Even as America has blessed us with extraordinary opportunities, there were moments in my life where I've been treated differently because of the color of my skin.

Many countries, including the United States, grapple with questions of identity and inequality and how we treat each other, people who are different than us, how we deal with diversity of beliefs and of faiths. And right now, in crowded neighborhoods not far from here, a man is driving an autorickshaw or washing somebody else's clothes or doing the hard work no one else will do. And a woman is cleaning somebody else's house. And a young man is on a bicycle delivering lunch. A little girl is hauling a heavy bucket of water. And I believe their dreams, their hopes, are just as important, just as beautiful, just as worthy as ours. And so even as we live in a world of terrible inequality, we're also proud to live in countries where even the grandson of a cook can become President, or even a Dalit can help write a constitution, and even a tea seller can become Prime Minister.

The point is, is that the aim of our work must be not to just have a few do well, but to have everybody have a chance, everybody who is willing to work for it have the ability to dream big and then reach those dreams.

Our nations are strongest when we uphold the equality of all our people, and that includes our women. Now, you may have noticed, I am married to a very strong and talented woman. Michelle is not afraid to speak her mind or tell me when I'm wrong, which happens frequently. [*Laughter*] And we have two beautiful daughters, so I'm surrounded by smart, strong women. And in raising our girls, we've tried to instill in them basic values: a sense of compassion for others and respect for themselves and the confidence that they can go as far as their imaginations and abilities will carry them. And as part of Michelle's work as First Lady, she's met with women and girls around the world, including here in India, to let them know that America believes in them too.

In the United States, we're still working to make sure that women and girls have all the opportunities they deserve and that they're treated equally. And we have some great role models, including here today the former Speaker of our House of Representatives, Nancy Pelosi, who was the first woman Speaker of the House, and my great partner.

And here in India, it's the wives and the mothers who so often hold families and communities together. Indian women have shown that they can succeed in every field, including government, where many of your leaders are women. And the young women who are here today are part of a new generation that is making your voice heard and standing up and determined to play your part in India's progress.

And here's what we know. We know from experience that nations are more successful when their women are successful. When girls go to school—no, this is one of the most direct measures of whether a nation is going to develop effectively is how it treats its women. When a girl goes to school, it doesn't just open up her young mind, it benefits all of us, because maybe someday, she'll start her own business or invent a new technology or cure a disease. And when women are able to work, families are healthier and communities are wealthier and entire countries are more prosperous. And when young women are educated, then their children are going to be well educated and have more opportunity.

So if nations really want to succeed in today's global economy, they can't simply ignore the talents of half their people. And as husbands and fathers and brothers, we have to

step up, because every girl's life matters. Every daughter deserves the same chance as our sons. Every woman should be able to go about her day—to walk the streets or ride the bus—and be safe and be treated with respect and dignity. She deserves that.

And one of the favorite things about this trip for me has been to see all these incredible Indian women in the Armed Forces, including the person who commanded the Guard that greeted me when I arrived. It's remarkable, and it's a sign of great strength and great progress.

Our nations are strongest when we see that we are all God's children, all equal in His eyes and worthy of His love. Across our two great countries we have Hindus and Muslims, Christians and Sikhs and Jews and Buddhists and Jains and so many faiths. And we remember the wisdom of Gandhiji, who said, "For me, the different religions are beautiful flowers from the same garden, or they are branches of the same majestic tree." Branches of the same majestic tree.

Our freedom of religion is written into our founding documents. It's part of America's very First Amendment. Your article 25 says that all people are "equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practice and propagate religion." In both our countries—in all countries—upholding this fundamental freedom is the responsibility of government, but it's also the responsibility of every person.

In our lives, Michelle and I have been strengthened by our Christian faith. But there have been times where my faith has been questioned—by people who don't know me—or they've said that I adhere to a different religion, as if that were somehow a bad thing. Around the world, we've seen intolerance and violence and terror perpetrated by those who profess to be standing up for their faith, but in fact, are betraying it. No society is immune from the darkest impulses of man. And too often, religion has been used to tap into those darker impulses as opposed to the light of God. Three years ago, in our State of Wisconsin back in the United States, a man went to a Sikh temple and, in a terrible act of violence, killed six innocent people, Americans and Indians. And in that moment of shared grief, our two countries reaffirmed a basic truth, as we must again today, that every person has the right to practice their faith how they choose or to practice no faith at all and to do so free of persecution and fear and discrimination.

The peace we seek in the world begins in human hearts. And it finds its glorious expression when we look beyond any differences in religion or tribe and rejoice in the beauty of every soul. And nowhere is that more important than India. Nowhere is it going to be more necessary for that foundational value to be upheld. India will succeed so long as it is not splintered along the lines of religious faith—so long it's not splintered along any lines—and is unified as one nation.

And it's when all Indians, whatever your faith, go to the movies and applaud actors like Shah Rukh Khan. And when you celebrate athletes like Milkha Singh or Mary Kom. And every Indian can take pride in the courage of a humanitarian who liberates boys and girls from forced labor and exploitation—who is here today—Kailash Satyarthi, our most recent winner of the Nobel Prize for Peace.

So that's what unifies us: Do we act with compassion and empathy? Are we measured by our efforts, by what Dr. King called "the content of our character," rather than the color of our skin or the manner in which we worship our God? In both our countries, in India and in America, our diversity is our strength. And we have to guard against any efforts to divide ourselves along sectarian lines or any other lines. And if we do that well, if America shows itself as an example of its diversity and yet the capacity to live together and work together in common effort, in common purpose; if India, as massive as it is, with so much diversity, so many differences, is able to continually affirm its democracy, that is an example for every other country on Earth. That's what makes us world leaders: not just the size of our economy or the number of weapons we have or—but our ability to show the way in how we work together and how much respect we show each other.

And finally, our nations are strongest when we empower our young people. Because ultimately, you're the one who has to break down these old stereotypes and these old barriers, these old ways of thinking. Prejudices and stereotypes and assumptions—those are what happens to old minds like mine. I'm getting gray hair now. I was more youthful when I first started this office. [*Laughter*] And that's why young people are so important in these efforts.

Here in India, most people are under 35 years old. And India is on track to become the world's most populous country. So young Indians like you aren't just going to define the future of this nation, you're going to shape the world. Like young people everywhere, you want to get an education and find a good job and make your mark. And it's not easy, but in our two countries, it's possible.

Remember, Michelle and I don't come from wealthy backgrounds or famous families. Our families didn't have a lot of money. We did have parents and teachers and communities that cared about us. And with the help of scholarships and student loans, we were able to attend some of best schools of the world. Without that education, we wouldn't be here today. So whether it's in America or here in India or around the world, we believe young people like you ought to have every chance to pursue your dreams as well.

So as India builds new community colleges, we'll link you with our own so more young people graduate with the skills and training to succeed. We'll increase collaborations between our colleges and universities and help create the next Indian Institute of Technology. We'll encourage young entrepreneurs who want to start a business. And we'll increase exchanges, because I want more American students coming to India and more Indian students coming to America. And that way, we can learn from each other, and we can go further. Because one other thing we have in common: Indians and Americans are some of the hardest working people on Earth.

And I've seen that—Michelle and I have seen that in a family here in India. I just want to tell you a quick story. On our last visit here, we visited Humayun's Tomb. And while we were there, we met some of the laborers who are the backbone of this nation's progress. We met their children and their families as well, and some wonderful young children with bright smiles, sparks in their eyes. And one of the children we met was a boy named Vishal.

And today, Vishal is 16 years old. And he and his family live in South Delhi, in the village of Mor Band. [*Applause*] This is Vishal. And his mother works hard in their modest home, and his sister is now in university; she wants to become a teacher. His brother is a construction worker earning his daily wage. And his father works as a stone layer, farther away, but sends home what little he makes so Vishal can go to school. And Vishal loves math, and mostly, he studies. And when he's not studying, he likes watching kabaddi. And he dreams of someday joining the Indian Armed Forces. And we're grateful that Vishal and his family joined us today. We're very proud of him, because he's an example of the talent that's here. And Vishal's dreams are as important as Malia and Sasha's dreams, our daughters. And we want him to have the same opportunities.

Sisters and brothers of India, we are not perfect countries. And we've known tragedy, and we've known triumph. We're home to glittering skyscrapers, but also terrible poverty; and new wealth, but also rising inequality. We have many challenges in front of us. But the reason I stand here today and am so optimistic about our future together is that, despite our imperfections, our two nations possess the keys to progress in the century ahead. We vote in free elections. We work and we build and we innovate. We lift up the least among us. We reach for heights previous generations could not even imagine. We respect human rights and human dignity, and it is recorded in our constitutions. And we keep striving to live up to those ideals put to paper all those years ago.

And we do these things because they make our lives better and safer and more prosperous. But we also do them because our moral imaginations extend beyond the limits of our own lives. And we believe that the circumstances of our birth need not dictate the arc of our lives.

We believe in the father working far from home sending money back so his family might have a better life. We believe in the mother who goes without so that her children might have something more. We believe in the laborer earning his daily wage and the student pursuing her degree. And we believe in a young boy who knows that if he just keeps studying, if he's just given the chance, his hopes might be realized too.

We are all "beautiful flowers from the same garden . . . branches of the same majestic tree." And I'm the first American President to come to your country twice, but I predict I will not be the last. Because, as Americans, we believe in the promise of India. We believe in the people of India. We are proud to be your friend. We are proud to be your partner as you build the country of your dreams.

Jai Hind! Thank you. *Jai Hind!*

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:02 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Neha Buch, volunteer, Pravah; Pooja Thakur, wing commander, India's Inter-Service Guard of Honour; and South Delhi, India, resident Vishal Ahirwar, and his parents Geeta and Ramdas, sister Khushboo, and brother Narendra.

Statement on International Holocaust Remembrance Day and the 70th Anniversary of the Liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau
January 27, 2015

On the 10th International Holocaust Remembrance Day and the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, the American people pay tribute to the 6 million Jews and millions of others murdered by the Nazi regime. We also honor those who survived the Shoah, while recognizing the scars and burdens that many have carried ever since.

Honoring the victims and survivors begins with our renewed recognition of the value and dignity of each person. It demands from us the courage to protect the persecuted and speak out against bigotry and hatred. The recent terrorist attacks in Paris serve as a painful reminder of our obligation to condemn and combat rising anti-Semitism in all its forms, including the denial or trivialization of the Holocaust.

This anniversary is an opportunity to reflect on the progress we have made confronting this terrible chapter in human history and on our continuing efforts to end genocide. I have sent a Presidential delegation to join Polish President Komorowski, the Polish people, official delegations from scores of nations, and many survivors at today's official commemoration in Poland.

As a founding member of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, the United States joins the alliance's 30 other member nations and partners in reiterating its solemn responsibility to uphold the commitments of the 2000 Stockholm Declaration. We commemorate all of the victims of the Holocaust, pledging never to forget, and recalling the cautionary words of the author and survivor of Auschwitz Primo Levi: "It happened, therefore it can happen again. . . . It can happen anywhere." Today we come together and commit, to the millions of murdered souls and all survivors, that it must never happen again.

Memorandum on Withdrawal of Certain Areas of the United States Outer Continental Shelf Offshore Alaska From Leasing Disposition
January 27, 2015

Memorandum for the Secretary of the Interior

Subject: Withdrawal of Certain Areas of the United States Outer Continental Shelf Offshore Alaska from Leasing Disposition

Consistent with principles of responsible public stewardship entrusted to this office,

with due consideration of the critical importance of certain areas within the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas to subsistence use by Alaska Natives as well as for marine mammals, other wildlife, and wildlife habitat, and to ensure that the unique resources of these areas remain available for future generations, I hereby direct as follows:

Under the authority granted to me in section 12(a) of the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act, 43 U.S.C. 1341(a), I hereby withdraw from disposition by leasing for a time period without specific expiration (1) the areas of the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) currently designated by the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management as leasing deferral areas within the Chukchi Sea Planning Area and the Beaufort Sea Planning Area in the 5-year oil and gas leasing program for 2012–2017; and (2) the Hanna Shoal region of the Chukchi Sea Planning Area lying within the contours of the 40-meter isobath. The boundaries of the withdrawn areas are more specifically delineated in the attached maps and accompanying table of OCS blocks. Both the maps and table form a part of this memorandum. This withdrawal prevents consideration of these areas for any future oil or gas leasing for purposes of exploration, development, or production.

Nothing in this withdrawal affects the rights under existing leases in the withdrawn areas.

BARACK OBAMA

Remarks During a Radio Address With Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India and a Question-and-Answer Session in New Delhi, India
January 27, 2015

[*Prime Minister Modi began his remarks in Hindi, and no transcript was provided. He continued in English as follows.*]

Prime Minister Modi. I request President Barack Obama to say a few words.

President Obama. Namaste. Thank you, Prime Minister Modi, for your kind words and for the incredible hospitality you've shown me and my wife Michelle on this visit.

And let me say to the people of India how honored I am to be the first American President to join you for Republic Day. I'm told this is also the first-ever radio address by an Indian Prime Minister and an American President together, so we're making a lot of history in a short time.

To the people of India listening all across this great nation, it's wonderful to be able to speak to you directly. We just came from discussions in which we affirmed that India and the United States are natural partners, because we have so much in common. We're two great democracies, two innovative economies, two diverse societies dedicated to empowering individuals. We are linked together by millions of proud Indian Americans who still have family and carry on traditions from India. And I want to say to the Prime Minister how much I appreciate your strong personal commitment to strengthening the relationship between these two countries.

People are very excited in the United States about the energy that Prime Minister Modi is bringing to efforts in this country to reduce extreme poverty and lift people up, to empower women, to provide access to electricity and clean energy, and invest in infrastructure and the education system.

And on all these issue, we want to be partners. Because many of the efforts that I am promoting inside the United States to make sure that young people get the best education possible, to make sure that ordinary people are properly compensated for their labor and paid fair wages and have job security and health care—these are the same kinds of issues that Prime Minister Modi, I know, cares so deeply about here.

And I think there's a common theme in these issues. It gives us a chance to reaffirm what Gandhiji reminded us should be a central

aim of our lives, and that is, we should endeavor to see God through service of humanity because God is in everyone. So these shared values, these convictions are a large part of why I'm so committed to this relationship. I believe that if the United States and India join together on the world stage around these values, then not only will our peoples be better off, but I think the world will be more prosperous and more peaceful and more secure for the future.

So thank you so much, Mr. Prime Minister, for giving me this opportunity to be with you here today.

Prime Minister Modi. Barack, the first question comes from Raj from Mumbai.

President Obama's Daughters

[*Prime Minister Modi spoke in Hindi, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

A young doctor: "The whole world was about your affectionate love for your daughters. What do you plan to tell your daughters about your experiences in India? And do you plan to go shopping and buy things for them?"

President Obama. Well, first of all, they very much wanted to come. They are fascinated by India. Unfortunately, each time that I've taken a trip here they had school and they couldn't leave school. And in fact, Malia, my older daughter, had exams just recently.

So they are fascinated by the culture and the history of India, in part because of my influence, I think. They are deeply moved by India's movement to independence and the role that Gandhi played in not only the nonviolent strategies here in India, but how those ended up influencing the nonviolent civil rights movement in the United States.

So when I go back, I'm going to tell them that India is as magnificent as they imagined. And I am quite sure they're going to have to—going to insist that I bring them back the next time I visit. It may not be during my Presidency, but afterwards, they'll definitely want to come and visit.

And I will definitely do some shopping for them, although, I can't go to the stores myself, so I have to have my team do the shopping for me. And I'll get some advice from Michelle, because she probably has a better sense of what they would like.

[*Prime Minister Modi spoke in Hindi, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

Prime Minister Modi. Barack said that he would bring his daughters, and I do believe you can bring them when you're the President or even after, but definitely, India looks forward to welcoming you and your daughters.

[*Inaudible*]—question: "You have started the 'Educate the Girl Child' mission. Have you spoken to the President of the United States about this? Have you asked him for help about this?"

I think this is a very good question you've asked. The poor sex ratio in India is a cause of great concern. We have a sex ratio of a thousand boys, and in comparison to that the number of girls is very low. And even our way of looking at, or our perspective of viewing women and men, girls and boys, is something that needs to be rectified.

I think when we look at President Obama and the way in which he has brought up his two daughters, I think this is an inspiration for us. In our country, we have so many people, and we have so many families where there are no sons and they only have daughters, and they do bring up their daughters very proudly. And I think that is an inspiration. And I think this kind of inspiration can be a strength for us.

And since you've asked this question, I would like to say that "Save the Girl Child," "Educate the Girl Child" is a social responsibility that we have. It's a responsibility that we have towards our culture, it's a responsibility towards humanity.

[*Prime Minister Modi spoke in English as follows.*]

The second question for President Obama comes through e-mail: Dr. Kamlesh Upadhay, a doctor based in Ahmedabad, Gujarat.

India-U.S. Public Health Cooperation/Childhood Obesity/Global Health Improvement Efforts

[*Prime Minister Modi spoke in Hindi, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

And I have another question which is also being addressed to Barack, and it's been addressed to me as well: "Your wife has been working on diseases like obesity and diabetes. She's been doing a lot of work in this field. These challenges are growing at a rapid pace in India, as well. So after leaving office, do you and the First Lady plan to or intend to come to India. For instance, as Bill Gates and Melinda Gates have taken up cleanliness as an issue in India, so do you think that you would work on obesity and diabetes?"

President Obama. Well, we very much look forward to partnering with organizations and the Government and nongovernmental organizations here in India around broader public health issues, including the issue of obesity.

I'm very proud of the work that Michelle has done on this issue. We're seeing a worldwide epidemic of obesity, in many cases starting at a very young age. Part of it has to do with the increase in processed foods, not naturally prepared. Part of it is the lack of activity for too many children. And once they're on this path, it can lead to a lifetime of health challenges.

And so this is an issue that we'd like to work on internationally, including here in India. And it is part of a broader set of issues around global health that we need to address. The Prime Minister and I have discussed, for example, how we can do a better job in dealing with issues like pandemic and making sure that we have good alert systems so that if a disease like Ebola or a deadly flu virus or Polio appears, that it's detected quickly and then treated quickly so that it doesn't spread.

And the public health infrastructure around the world needs to be improved. I think the Prime Minister is doing a great job in focusing on these issues here in India, and India has a lot to teach many other countries who may not be advancing as rapidly in improving this public health sector.

But it has an impact on everything because if children are sick, they can't concentrate in school and they fall behind. It has a huge economic impact on the countries involved. And so we think that there's a lot of progress to be made here, and I'm very excited about the possibilities of continuing this work even after I leave office.

[*Prime Minister Modi spoke in Hindi, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

Prime Minister Modi. [*Inaudible*]—has asked a question, and it's quite an interesting question. House has asked me: "There's an old photograph of you as a tourist in front of the White House. So when you went back to America last September, what aspect really touched your heart?"

Well, it's true that when I went to America for the first time I couldn't actually get into the White House, of course. There was a big iron fence outside the White House. And we had a photograph of ourselves clicked standing in front of that fence. And when I became Prime Minister, of course, that photograph has also become quite popular.

But at that time, of course, I never thought that I would have the opportunity of actually going into the White House. But one thing really did touch my heart, and I can never forget it. Barack gifted me a book, and I think he took a lot of trouble to actually find that book. In 1894, that book became famous. It had to do with Swami Vivekananda, who is one of the people I really deeply regard. There was a world religion conference in Chicago in 1894, and this was a compilation of the proceedings of that conference.

And his gifting me that book was something that really deeply touched me. And it wasn't just that. He had actually opened that book, read through that book, and actually put notes on the pages for me. And very proudly, he said that, I am from Chicago, and that is a city to which Swami Vivekananda had gone. And as I said, that deeply touched me, and I do consider that is something that is my heritage. I never did think that standing in front of the White

House, having a photograph taken, and actually going into the White House and being gifted a book of somebody I deeply respect—I mean, you can imagine how deeply that must have touched me.

Barack, there's a question for you now.

[*Prime Minister Modi spoke in English as follows.*]

Himani from Ludhiana, Punjab. The question is for you.

President Obama's Expectations for Success as a Young Man/Social Mobility in the U.S. and India/Education/Equality of Opportunity

President Obama. Well, the question is, did you both imagine you would reach the positions that you've reached today? And it's interesting, Mr. Prime Minister, you talking about the first time you visited the White House and being outside that iron fence. The same is true for me. When I first went to the White House, I stood outside that same fence and looked in. And I certainly did not imagine that I would ever be visiting there, much less living there.

I think both of us have been blessed with extraordinary opportunity, coming from relatively humble beginnings. And when I think about what's best in America and what's best in India, the notion that a tea seller or somebody who is born to a single mother, like me, could end up leading our countries is an extraordinary example of the opportunities that exist within our countries.

Now, I think part of what motivates both you and I is the belief that there are millions of children out there who have the same potential, but may not have the same education, may not be getting exposed to opportunities in the same way. And so part of our job, part of government's job, is that young people who have talent and who have drive and are willing to work for it are able to succeed.

And that's why emphasizing school, higher education, making sure that children are healthy, and making sure those opportunities are available to children of all backgrounds, girls and boys, people of all religious faiths and all races in the United States is so important, because you never know who might be the next Prime Minister of India or who might be the next President of the United States. They might not always look the part right off the bat, and they might just surprise you if you give them a chance.

[*Prime Minister Modi spoke in English as follows.*]

Prime Minister Modi. Thank you, Barack.

[*Prime Minister Modi spoke in Hindi, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

This was also addressed to me: "Did you ever think that you would reach the position you have today?"

No, I never imagined that, because, as Barack said, I came from a very humble background. But for a very long time, I remember that I told people that don't ever imagine you're going to become somebody, don't ever dream of becoming somebody. If you have to dream something, then dream of doing something. Because when you do something, you also get satisfaction, and you're inspired to do more. If you only want to become something and then you don't become what you wanted to become, you are disappointed. And that is why I never, ever dreamt of becoming someone.

And even today, I don't dream of becoming somebody, but certainly, I do dream of doing things. I do want to serve my country. I want to serve the 1.25 billion people in my country. And I think that there can't be anything more ambitious than that.

There is also a question for Barack.

[*Prime Minister Modi spoke in English as follows.*]

From Om Prakash. Om Prakash is studying Sanskrit at JNU. He belongs to Jhunjunu, Rajasthan. Om Prakash is a convener of Special Centre for Sanskrit Studies in JNU.

Democracy/Transparency in Government

President Obama. Well, this is a very interesting question. His question is: "The youth of the new generation is a global citizen. He's not limited by time or boundaries. In such a situation, what should be the approach by our leadership, governments, as well as societies at large?" And I think this is a very important question.

When I look at this generation that's coming up, they're exposed to the world in ways that you and I could hardly imagine. They have the world at their fingertips, literally. They can, using their mobile phone, get information and images from all around the world. And that's extraordinarily powerful. And what that means, I think is, is that governments and leaders cannot simply try to govern or rule by a top-down strategy, but rather, have to reach out to people in an inclusive way and an open way and a transparent way and engage in a dialogue with citizens about the direction of their country.

And one of the great things about India and the United States is, we're both open societies, and we have confidence and faith that when citizens have information and there's a vigorous debate, that over time, even though sometimes, democracy is frustrating, the best decisions and the most stable societies emerge, and the most prosperous societies emerge, and new ideas are constantly being exchanged. And technology today, I think, facilitates that not just within countries, but across countries.

And so I have much greater faith in India and the United States, countries that are open-information societies, in being able to succeed and thrive in this new Information Age than closed societies that try to control the information that citizens receive. Because ultimately, that's not—no longer possible. Information will flow inevitably one way or the other. And we want to make sure that we're fostering a healthy debate and a good conversation between all peoples.

[*Prime Minister Modi spoke in Hindi, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

Prime Minister Modi. That was addressed to Barack. It is a question that is also addressed to me. And I think that the answer that Barack has given is very good, is very inspirational. What I would like to say is that people influenced by a communist viewpoint used to call for communism across the world. They used to say, "Workers of the world unite," the workers of the world should become one. That was a slogan that we've heard for decades.

I do believe that the youth today have strength. They are able to reach out and looking at that strength, I think we should say that the youth unite the world. We need to change our slogan. The youth of today must bring the world together. I do believe that youth today have the strength and they can do it.

The next question is from a chartered accountant from Bombay. He's asked me this question. He's asked me: "Which American leader has inspired you?"

When we were small, we used to look at Kennedy's photographs in the newspapers, and we thought his personality was really impressive. But the question is, who inspired me?

I had a great interest for reading when I was young, and I did read Benjamin Franklin's autobiography. He lived to a ripe old age, and he never did become President of the United States. But his life is really inspirational: how one person can manage to change his life; how he can make those attempts intelligently; how he can deliberately seek to reduce the number of hours that he needs to sleep, how to reduce the amount of food, the kind of hunger, that he feels; and how to influence people who are angry with him, how to find solutions to that.

There are very, very small issues that he has addressed in his biography. And I always tell everyone that we need to read about Benjamin Franklin's life. He's an inspiration to me, even today. He was a multifaceted personality. He was a political scientist. He was a thinker. He was a social worker. And he came from a very humble background. He wasn't able to complete his schooling, but he has had a profound influence on American life and thought, even today. And I really found his life to be truly in-

spirational, and I would like to motivate you to read about his life.

And if you want to learn how to transform your life, you would be able to learn it from there. There are small examples that he gives that can serve as an example to you. And I do believe that you would find this an inspiration as well.

There is a question from Monika to Barack. Barack, this question is addressed to you.

President Obama's Sources of Inspiration/Importance of Public Service

President Obama. Well, the question is: "As leaders of two major economies, what inspires you and makes you smile after a bad day at work?" And that's a very good question.

I say sometimes that the only problems that come to my desk are the ones that nobody else solves. If they were easy questions, then somebody else would have solved them before they reached me. So there are days when it's tough and frustrating. And that's true in foreign affairs, that's true in domestic affairs.

But I tell you what inspires me—and I don't know, Mr. Prime Minister, if you share this view. Almost every day, I meet somebody who tells me, you made a difference in my life. So they'll say, the health care law that you passed saved my child who didn't have health insurance, and they were able to get an examination from a physician, and they caught an early tumor, and now he's doing fine. Or they'll say, you helped me save my home during the economic crisis. Or they'll say, I couldn't afford college, and the program you set has allowed me to go to the university.

And sometimes, they're thanking you for things that you did 4 or 5 years ago. Sometimes, they're thanking you for things you don't even remember or you're not thinking about that day. But it's a reminder of what you said earlier, which is, if you focus on getting things done as opposed to just occupying an office or maintaining power, then the satisfaction that you get is unmatched.

And the good thing about service is, is that anybody can do it. If you're helping somebody else, the satisfaction that you can get from that, I think, exceeds anything else that you can do. And that's usually what makes me inspired to do more and helps get through the challenges and difficulties that we all have, because obviously, we're not the only people with bad days at work. I think everybody knows what it's like to have a bad day at work. You just have to keep on working through it. Eventually, you'll make a difference.

[*Prime Minister Modi spoke in Hindi, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

Prime Minister Modi. Barack has really spoken from the heart. Because no matter what office we hold, we are all individuals, we are all human beings first. And listening to this, I also feel like recounting an episode from my life.

For many years, I was working, I was single, and I was occupied with my work. And a lot of people at that time used to give me food to eat. And there was one family that used to invite me very often, but I never went to their house because I felt they were very poor, and I thought if I go to their house and have dinner, then it will be a burden on them. But one day, because they were so affectionate and kept inviting me, I did bow to their wishes and visited them.

They had a very small hut. There was a very small place to sit there. They gave me something to eat, which was a piece of bread and some milk. And they had a small child who was looking at that milk, was just staring at it. And it looked as if the child had never even seen milk. So I quickly gave that glass of milk to the child, and immediately, within seconds, he just drank up that milk. His own parents were quite angry with him because he had had my milk, but I experienced at that point that perhaps that child had never had any milk besides his mother's milk. And they had wanted to feed me well, and that's why they had gone and got milk.

And it really touched me that somebody living in a poor hut, a poor family would go through that kind of trouble to feed me. And you need to actually dedicate your life to

serving these people, and that is something that inspires me.

As Barack has said, what common people feel is something that we've experienced. And I'm very grateful that Barack has taken the time out today to join us, to speak to us. I'm also very grateful to the people of this country, because I know that people in every town, in every city, in every street are listening to this program. And we hope that this program, that the voice that we are spreading will be with you always.

And I do have an appeal. I have a suggestion. We are going to take out an e-book of this conversation between Barack and me today. We want to bring out an e-book of this conversation. And I would like to ask those listeners who have been listening in on this program today to participate. The best hundred suggestions that we get will be included in this e-book that we plan to bring out. So whether it's on Twitter, Facebook, or any other online medium, use hashtag #YesWeCan. Write to us using this hashtag #YesWeCan. The issue——

[*Prime Minister Modi spoke in English as follows.*]

Eliminate poverty, hashtag #YesWeCan. Quality health care to all, hashtag #YesWeCan. Youth empowered with education, hashtag #YesWeCan. Jobs for all, hashtag #YesWeCan. Global peace and progress, hashtag #YesWeCan.

[*Prime Minister Modi continued in Hindi, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

I want that you join this movement, that you write in with this hashtag. Give us your thoughts, give us your ideas. We will select the best hundred ideas. And the conversation that we've had today, Barack and me, we will be taking up these ideas, including them in that e-book. And we hope that this will become everyone's thoughts, the heart-to-heart thoughts of everyone.

I'm, again, very grateful to Barack for being here. And on the auspicious occasion of Republic Day on the 26th of January, I am very happy, and I'm very proud that he's with us today. Thank you.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 5:37 p.m. on January 25 in the Billiard Room at Hyderabad House. It was broadcast at 8 p.m. on January 27 as a special episode of Prime Minister Modi's monthly radio program, "Mann Ki Baat." In the address, Prime Minister Modi referred to William H. Gates III and Melinda French Gates, cochairs, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 27. Audio of the translation of the Hindi portions of Prime Minister Modi's remarks was not available for verification of the content of the remarks.

Remarks at an Armed Forces Farewell Tribute in Honor of Secretary of Defense Charles T. Hagel at Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall, Virginia
January 28, 2015

Thank you. Good afternoon, everyone. Michelle and I, as some of you know, just spent the past few days in India. I returned about 3 o'clock this morning. So I don't know exactly what time it is—[*laughter*]—or what day it is. But I was determined to be here with you this afternoon to honor and celebrate a great friend, to me and to all of us.

In October of 1967, President Lyndon Johnson traveled to a military base in New Mexico to review a top-secret weapons program. And he went down to the White Sands Missile Range and out to the testing grounds. There, out in the desert, the President watched as soldiers demonstrated what would later become the famed Stinger missile. And one of those soldiers was a 21-year-old private from Nebraska named Charles Timothy Hagel.

Now, the Secret Service does not usually let me get too close to an active weapons system.

It makes them nervous. But clearly, they did things a little differently back in LBJ's days. And, Chuck, I can only assume that you were careful not to point the missile at the President, because what followed was a life of dedicated service to our Nation spanning nearly 50 years.

With Vice President Biden, Members of Congress, General Dempsey, leaders from across this department, members of the Joint Chiefs, and service Secretaries; to the men and women of the greatest military in the world: We gather to pay tribute to a true American patriot. And let me assure you that I checked with the Secret Service, and Chuck will not be demonstrating any missile launchers today. [*Laughter*]

As we all know, and we've heard again, Chuck loves Nebraska. The Cornhuskers. Red beer. Runzas—I don't know what those are, but I hear they taste pretty good. [*Laughter*] But above all, what Chuck loves most about his home State is the people, his fellow midwesterners. There are just under 2 million people in Nebraska; there are more than 7 billion people on the planet. But as so many of our troops have found out themselves, no matter where Chuck goes in the world, if you are from Nebraska, he will find you. [*Laughter*] And he'll talk with you and listen to you and ask you about your family back home. And chances are, he knows them too.

So today is a celebration of a quintessentially American life, a man from the heartland who devoted his life to America. Just imagine, in your mind's eye, the defining moments of his life. The kid from Nebraska who, as Marty said, volunteered to go to Vietnam. The soldier outside Saigon, rushing to pull his own brother from a burning APC. The deputy at the VA who stood up for his fellow Vietnam vets who were exposed to agent orange. The Senator who helped lead the fight for the post-9/11 GI bill, to give this generation of heroes the same opportunities that he had.

I asked Chuck to lead this Department at a moment of profound transition. And today we express our gratitude for the progress under his watch. After more than 13 years, our combat mission in Afghanistan is over, and America's longest war has come to a responsible and honorable end. Because of Chuck's direction, a strategic review has made difficult choices in a time of tight budgets, while still making sure that our forces are ready to be called on for any contingency.

Today, our troops are supporting Afghan forces. They continue to face risks, and they remain relentless in their pursuit of Al Qaida networks. They're leading the coalition to destroy ISIL, a coalition that includes Arab nations, in no small measure because Chuck strengthened key partnerships in the Middle East. And under his leadership, our forces in West Africa are helping to lead the global fight against Ebola, saving lives and showing American leadership at its very, very best.

Even as we've met these pressing challenges, Chuck has helped us to prepare for the century ahead. In Europe, a stronger NATO is reassuring our allies. In the Asia-Pacific, one of my foreign policy priorities, Chuck helped modernize our alliances, strengthen partnerships, bolster defense posture, improve communications between the United States and Chinese militaries, all of which helps to ensure that the United States remains a strong Pacific power.

Because Chuck helped build new trust, we'll expand our defense cooperation with India. I just demonstrated during my visit there the degree to which that partnership is moving in a new direction. That's partly attributable to work that Chuck did.

And the reforms he launched will help make this Department more efficient and innovative for years to come. Thanks to Secretary Hagel's guiding hand, this institution is better positioned for the future.

But, Chuck, I want to suggest today that perhaps your greatest impact—a legacy that will be felt for decades to come—has been your own example. It's not simply that you've been the first enlisted combat veteran and the first Vietnam veteran to serve as Secretary of Defense. It's how your life experience—being down in the mud, feeling the bullets fly

overhead—has allowed you to connect with our troops like no other Secretary before you.

You've welcomed our junior enlisted personnel to lunch in your office and made them feel at home, and they told you what was really on their minds. When you spoke to our newest sergeant majors about the true meaning of leadership and responsibility, they knew they were learning from one of their own. And in those quiet moments, when you've pinned a Purple Heart on a wounded warrior, you were there not just as Secretary of Defense, but as an old Army sergeant who knows the wages of war and still carries the shrapnel in your chest.

And these aren't fleeting moments, they reflect the driving force of Chuck Hagel's service: his love of our troops and his determination to take care of them after more than 13 years of war. Today, our military hospitals are getting stronger, our women are more integrated into the force than ever before. We're making progress in combating sexual assault. We'll bring home the remains of fallen heroes faster, and more Vietnam veterans will finally be eligible for the disability pay they deserved all along. And, Chuck, that's because of you. That's part of your legacy.

Of course, I'm grateful to Chuck on a very personal level. Exactly 10 years ago this month, I joined you in the United States Senate, along with the Vice President. I was new and green; you were a veteran legislator. I was the student, and you shared some of the lessons of your service. I was young, and you were—well. [*Laughter*] And though we came from different parties, we often saw the world the same way, including our conviction that even as we must never hesitate to defend our Nation, we must never rush into war. We both believed that America should only send her sons and daughters into harm's way when it is absolutely necessary. And when we do, we make sure they've got everything that they need to succeed; they've got a mission that is worthy of their sacrifice.

In an era of politics that too often descends into spectacle, you've always served with decency and dignity. And in a town of outsized egos, you've never lost your midwestern humility. You've always been frank and honest and said what you thought. And I have so profoundly benefited from that candor. You represent a tradition of bipartisanship in national security that we need more of today. And Joe Biden reflects that. I see Dick Lugar in the stands; he reflects that. That's when we're at our best. And from sergeant to Secretary, you've always been guided by one interest: what you believe is best for America. And I thank you for your friendship and your counsel, and all of us thank you for your character and your integrity.

Of course, nobody serves alone. Lilibet, Allyn, Ziller, thank you for sharing your husband and father with us and for the sacrifices that your family has made for all of ours. And, Chuck, since our lives are so often the reflection of those closest to us, today I also want to acknowledge the service of your brother Tom; the World War II service of your father Charles; the sacrifices of your late mom Betty, who worked day and night to raise her four sons. We salute this American family.

Our men and women in uniform here today, those who stand where Chuck once stood, they don't ask for much. They volunteered; they accept the risks that come with military service. But they do ask this: that this Nation take care of them as well as they've taken care of us, that we provide them with the resources to do their jobs and meet the missions that we ask of them. After all that they've given for us, after all that they've sacrificed, they have the right to expect that we will meet our obligations as well. And that's my duty as Commander in Chief. And this will be the work of my nominee to be the next Secretary of Defense, Mr. Ash Carter. But this must be the work of us all, as Americans grateful to those who serve in our name. And that's the story of Chuck Hagel's life.

I'll close with a story that came about last year. I was going to tell the story about when we were traveling in Iraq, and Chuck wore these pair of sort of Hush Puppy bedroom slipper shoes out into the desert, and the flaps started opening up and his toes were sticking out. But I'm going to skip that story. [*Laughter*]

He then ended up buying me a pair, which I have never worn, I'm proud to say. [*Laughter*]

This is a different story. One day last year, I was in the Oval Office, and Chuck came in for what I thought would be our regular weekly meeting. But he had a guest, and he introduced us. And his name was Jerome "Skip" Johnson, a friendly guy, a grandfather, and he was from my hometown of Chicago. And Chuck explained that Skip—Lieutenant Johnson—had been his platoon commander in Vietnam. But they had lost touch, until Chuck tracked him down. This was the first time they had reunited in nearly 50 years. And Chuck just wanted to bring Skip to the Oval Office to say hello to the President—to meet his family, including his young grandsons.

And Chuck told me about how it had been 1968, with protests and race riots back home causing tensions among our troops in Vietnam. And Chuck's unit was mostly White, but Skip is African American, and as the platoon commander, he was not going to tolerate division or distrust. And he went to his men and made himself clear: We are all Americans. We're going to live together. We're going to take care of each other. We're fighting together. We're going to get each other's backs. Let's get it done.

And at that moment in the Oval Office, as these two soldiers stood before me—with Skip's grandsons looking on—it wasn't lost on any of us how far our Nation has come. And I want to thank Chuck for that moment, because part of the reason we've traveled that distance is, we've had men like Chuck Hagel serving and representing what's best in America.

In moments when we are tested—as a military, as a nation—sometimes, we get distracted by what divides us and lose sight of what unites us. And at those moments, we can draw strength from the example of a sergeant from Nebraska and a lieutenant from Chicago. We are all Americans. We live together. We sacrifice together. We take care of each other. Sometimes, we have to fight together.

Ladies and gentlemen, I want to introduce to you my friend, our 24th Secretary of Defense, and an outstanding American, Mr. Chuck Hagel.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:37 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Thomas and Michael Hagel, brothers, Lilibet Hagel, wife, and Allyn and C. Ziller Hagel, children, of Secretary Hagel; and former Sen. Richard G. Lugar. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

Statement on the Final Report of the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission
January 29, 2015

I want to thank the members of the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission for their comprehensive and thorough review of the military compensation and retirement systems and their considered recommendations. In September 2013, I asked the Commission to focus on protecting the long-term viability of the All-Volunteer Force, improving quality of life for servicemembers and their families, and ensuring the fiscal sustainability of the compensation and retirement systems. Our men and women in uniform and their families deserve nothing less.

The Commission's report includes a number of specific proposals that I will review closely over the coming weeks, in consultation with our senior civilian and military leadership. I look forward to hearing their views and working with Congress to strengthen and modernize our military compensation and retirement systems.

Remarks at the House Democratic Issues Conference in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
January 29, 2015

The President. Hey! Hello, hello, hello! Hello, Democrats! Hey! Thank you so much. Thank you. Everybody, sit down, sit down. It's good to be with you, Democrats. It's good to be in Philadelphia. My understanding is, we still have our host, Mayor Nutter, here. Where's Mayor Nutter? There he is right there.

I want to just remind the New England and Pacific Northwest contingents, this is the City of Brotherly Love. So regardless of what you think about Sunday, I want you all to keep it clean. [*Laughter*] The—I am not taking sides on that one. [*Laughter*] I want to begin by—oh, bring your own footballs—that was—oooh. [*Laughter*] Oooh.

Audience members. Oooh——

The President. Wow. [*Laughter*]

Audience member. That's not overinflated.

The President. This is—and you're, what, a Giants fan?

Audience member. Jets fan.

The President. See, that's why he's so resentful. [*Laughter*]

I—let me begin by just acknowledging your outstanding leadership, starting with someone who, somehow, can travel for 17 hours, come off the plane perfectly coiffed—[*laughter*]—not a wrinkle on her, happy as a clam—[*laughter*]—come back another 17 hours later, after 2½, 3 days of programs, and go straight to a retreat of her caucus, and never miss a beat. I don't know what she drinks along with that chocolate. [*Laughter*] But I want some of it. Your outstanding leader, Nancy Pelosi. Give Nancy a big round of applause. [*Applause*] Hey!

Joe Crowley also went on that trip and didn't look perfectly coiffed when he got off the plane. [*Laughter*] But give Joe Crowley a big round of applause also. I want to thank Steny for the gracious introduction; Xavier, who helped obviously make this happen and is just providing outstanding leadership all the time; Jim Clyburn, one of my favorite people, just an extraordinary gentleman and leader. We love him. And Debbie Wasserman Shultz, our chairwoman of the DNC. Thank you so much.

And then, the guy who I had a chance to see before I came out just to let him know that he should not feel overly disappointed when his hair gets gray, because in this job it will—Ben Ray Luján, the DCCC chair. I used to be youthful and attractive like him. [*Laughter*] We'll see how long that lasts, brother. [*Laughter*] He's going to have hair like Steve Israel. [*Laughter*]

I'm not going to give a long speech because I just gave one, and I want to spend most of the time on questions. Let me summarize then what I said last week.

We have been through an extraordinarily challenging journey, worst financial crisis in our lifetimes. We've seen the incredible courage and sacrifice, but also the costs of two difficult wars. There's been ups and downs in every region of the country and people feeling as if the economy is churning in ways that defy their control. And yet, despite all the challenges, despite all the fears, despite all the difficulties, over the last 6 years, what we've seen is the American people fighting their way back. And because of them, because of their resilience and their grit and their hard work, and because you and I, together, made some really tough choices—some sometimes politically unpopular choices—America has come back.

We've seen 11 million jobs created, best job growth since the nineties, best job growth in manufacturing since the nineties; steepest drop in the unemployment rate in 30 years; deficit cut by two-thirds; over 10 million people with health insurance that didn't have it before. We've seen reading scores go up, high school graduation rates go up, more young people attending college than ever before. We're number one in oil production, number one in natural gas production; doubled clean energy production; solar power up tenfold; wind power up threefold; carbon pollution down.

There is no economic metric by which we are not better off than when I took office. And that is because of the extraordinary will and dedication of the American people, but also because all of you have done a terrific job. And I'm proud of you for that.

Now, what we also know is, we've now got some choices to make. Going forward, are we going to be an economy in which a few do spectacularly well, or are we going to be an economy in which everybody who's willing to work hard is getting a fair shot and can succeed? Are we going to be an economy that continues to invest in innovation and infrastructure, all the ingredients that are necessary to power this economy through the 21st century, or are we going to be neglectful of those very things that have made us an economic superpower? Are we going to do what's necessary to make sure that everybody gets the tools they need to succeed—the education, the childcare support, the help when it comes to minimum wages and paid sick leave—that gives people a basic baseline of stability, but also allows them to constantly adapt to an ever-changing world?

That's the set of choices that we now have to make. And because the economy has gotten better, wages are beginning to tick up, people are starting to feel better about the economy. But I think what everybody here understands is that the ground that middle class families lost over the last 30 years still has to be made up and the trends that have squeezed middle class families and those striving to get into the middle class, those trends have not been fully reversed.

And so as much as we should appreciate the progress that's been made, it shouldn't be a cause for complacency, because we've got more work to do. We've got a lot more work to do. And in my State of the Union, I laid out a series of specific proposals that would allow us to continue to control our deficit, but would also ensure that we were investing in the kind of quality education, including free community college, that is so necessary for people to move forward. Specific proposals to make sure that we provided some relief to middle class families in the form of a childcare credit and additional higher education credits so that somebody who is working hard and doing their best can get a little bit of relief, a little bit of help.

We talked about how important it is for us to rebuild our infrastructure in this country and put people back to work all across the country, something that everybody knows we need to do. And we've got very specific ways of paying for it, by closing loopholes that send jobs overseas and rewarding companies who are investing right here in the United States of America.

So I summarized all this as middle class economics. And what we know is, middle class economics works. That's been the history of this country. That's been the history of the last 6 years when we've implemented middle class economics. And the other side was telling us this would be a disaster and it would kill jobs and raise the deficit, health care costs would explode. And none of that happened. That's pretty rare where you have two visions, a vigorous debate, and then, you test who's right. And the record shows that we were right and middle class economics does work.

So the bottom line is this: We've got to make sure it continues to work. We should protect the progress we're making.

I hear Republicans are holding their 50th or 60th vote next year [week]* to repeal or undermine the Affordable Care Act. I've lost count at this point. But here's something easy to remember: If that bill ever actually reached my desk, I would happily veto it. If they try to unravel new rules that we put in place to make sure Wall Street recklessness doesn't hurt American families again, I'll be happy to veto it. If, rather than try to solve the problem of a broken immigration system, they compound the problem, I'll veto it.

But my hope is that they join us. And one good piece of news is, I noticed that even though their policies haven't quite caught up yet, their rhetoric is starting to sound pretty Democratic. [*Laughter*] I heard—Chris Van Hollen was telling me about one Republican

* White House correction.

Senator who shall go unnamed, but generally, doesn't agree with me on much, and he was suddenly shocked, shocked that the top 1 percent is doing really well and everybody else is getting squeezed, and we need to do something about it. And I think—I welcome that. I consider imitation the highest form of flattery. Come on board. Let's go help out that middle class family. Let's get something done.

We've got a former Presidential candidate on the other side who suddenly is just deeply concerned about poverty. [*Laughter*] That's great! Let's go! Come on! Let's do something about it!

I am glad that their rhetoric at least has shifted, but let's now make sure that the policies match up with the rhetoric. Let's make sure Americans are able to upgrade their skills for higher wages. Let's build the world's most competitive economy. Let's make sure that we end this across-the-board sequester that doesn't differentiate between smart Government spending and dumb Government spending. Let's take a scalpel and not a meat cleaver, and let's make sure that we're funding the things that we know help American families succeed. That's a smart thing to do.

I disagree with any Republican who says letting funding for the Department of Homeland Security lapse is "not the end of the world." That's a quote from one of them. I mean, I tell you, these are the guys who are always saying they're concerned about the borders. These are the folks who say they're concerned about terrorism. Well, who do you think helps monitor our borders? Well, what do you mean, it's not at the end of the world? That's all you've been talking about. And now, suddenly, because you want to make a political point, you think that we can afford to have the Department of Homeland Security not functioning, because of political games in Washington?

I mean, we can pay for all of the proposals that I put forward in the State of the Union we can pay for by fixing a Tax Code that is riddled with loopholes for special interests. And if Republicans don't agree with my approach for paying for it, then they should put forward their own proposals. And I'm happy to engage them on that. I'm eager to engage with them on that. I think it's entirely fair for them to say, that's not the right way to fund higher education, that's not the right way to help families with childcare. And we can have a good, healthy debate. What we can't suggest is that childcare is not important to American families or that higher education costs are not relevant to folks who are currently in the middle class or trying to work their way into the middle class or hoping their children will be able to get in the middle class. Those things are important. So put forward alternatives.

And the good news is, is that I think there are some who want to work with us. And maybe the fact that I've now run my last election means that, instead of just blocking what we're trying to do, they may be interested in getting some stuff done. Of course, they'll then spend all their time attacking the next Democrat coming down the pike, but that's okay.

Because, ultimately, what this is about, the reason we are here, the reason so many of you make such extraordinary sacrifices—and your families make sacrifices—to be here, is because the story of the people that I mentioned in the State of the Union—people like Rebekah, who I talked about, from Minnesota—those people are us. They're our moms and our dads and our aunts and our uncles and our nephews and our cousins and our neighbors and our coworkers and our friends. And we remember some point in time where somebody gave us a little bit of a hand up. And we remember that scholarship that allowed us to go to school when it wasn't clear that our family might be able to afford it. And we remember what it was like to try to find childcare when you've got two folks working and trying to pay the mortgage at the same time, just like Michelle and I had to do. We remember those things.

And the reason that we do this is so that those folks have the same extraordinary opportunities in the same extraordinary country as we did. And more importantly, so that our children and our grandchildren and our great-grandchildren have those same opportunities. And it is our obligation to make sure that we

are crystal clear about what we stand for and who we are fighting for.

And I will just say, obviously, we were all disappointed with the outcome of the last election, and there are a lot of reasons for it, and I'm happy to take on some of the blame. But one thing I'm positive about is, when we're shy about what we care about, when we're defensive about what we've accomplished, when we don't stand up straight and proud and say, yes, we believe that everybody in this country should have health insurance, and we're glad that we are making that happen; yes, we believe that families shouldn't be torn apart, and we're glad that we're fighting for immigration reform; yes, we believe in middle class economics, and we don't apologize for wanting to make sure that some wonderful young man or young woman out there can actually afford to go to college even if their parents didn't go—we need to stand up and go on offense and not be defensive about what we believe in. That's why we're Democrats.

And I promise you, I'm not going out the last 2 years sitting on the sidelines. I am going to be out there making the case every single day, and I hope you join me.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:34 p.m. at the Sheraton Philadelphia Society Hill Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Reps. Steny H. Hoyer, Xavier Becerra, and Mario R. Díaz-Balart; 2012 Republican Presidential nominee W. Mitt Romney; and St. Anthony, MN, resident, Rebekah Erler.

Remarks on Precision Medicine
January 30, 2015

Good job! Well, thank you so much, Elana, for that wonderful introduction. Let me just be clear, when I was 19, I was not doing genetic testing. [*Laughter*] When I met Elana at the White House Science Fair last year, she tried to explain her research to me. And to help her explain her findings, she made these giant pink chromosomes out of swim noodles, which was helpful to me—[*laughter*]—because I know what swim noodles are, and I saw how they fit together. But I could not have been more impressed with Elana.

And she represents the incredible talent and energy and possibility of our young people, and so I'm so proud of her, and I'm so grateful that she introduced me here today. And she's doing great at Harvard from my—from what I understand. So those of you who are interested in purchasing stock in her—[*laughter*]—I'm sure she has an agent of some sort that you can talk to.

We've got some folks here who are doing outstanding work to keep Americans healthy. We have America's Health and Human Services Secretary, Sylvia Burwell. You can give her a round of applause. [*Applause*] She's worthy of it. We've got our Surgeon General, Vivek Murthy. Where's Vivek? Stand up, Vivek. Our new Surgeon General. We haven't had one in a while. [*Laughter*] So we're really happy to have him here. And he looks sharp in his uniform. We have Dr. Harold Varmus of the National Cancer Institute. Harold. We have the singing scientist, Dr. Francis Collins, of NIH here. And we have my Science Adviser, Dr. John Holdren, who does not sing. For anyone wondering, "Is there a doctor in the house?"—we have got you covered.

We also have Members of Congress who are here. Lamar Alexander from the great State of Tennessee is one of the Senate's key supporters of encouraging medical innovation, and I'm so looking forward to working with him. Give Lamar a big round of applause. Senator Patty Murray is prepared to work with him on this issue. She couldn't make it here today. But we do have on the House side Congresswoman Diana DeGette, who is here and who is leading this effort in the House. And we're very proud of her.

Now, last week, in my State of the Union Address, I focused on what we need to do to make sure middle class economics helps more Americans get ahead in the new economy. We've got to help working families make ends

meet and make them feel more secure in a constantly changing, dynamic, global economy. We have to offer more opportunities for people to upgrade their skills for better paying jobs in this economy. And we've got to build the world's most competitive economy so that businesses create jobs here in the United States and not someplace else.

And that last part is what I want to focus on today. We've invited some of America's brightest minds in medicine and technology, some of our strongest advocates for privacy. And perhaps most importantly, we've invited patients who have the most at stake in these efforts. And we're here to harness what is most special about America, and that is our spirit of innovation, our ability to dream and take risks and tinker and try new things. And as a result of that, not only improve our economy, but improve the lives of men and women and children for generations to come. And together, what's so exciting is, is that we have the possibility of leading an entirely new era of medicine that makes sure new jobs and new industries and new lifesaving treatments for diseases are created right here in the United States.

Because we shouldn't just celebrate innovation. We have to invest in innovation. We have to nurture innovation. We have to encourage it and make sure that we're channeling it in ways that are most productive. And that's especially true when it comes to medicine. After all, when American researchers developed a vaccine for polio, a program created by Congress helped to distribute it. A federally funded study helped American doctors discover the risk factors for heart disease. Grants from the National Science Foundation and NIH supported the early experiments that led to the invention of the MRI.

And these kinds of investments don't always pay off. Basic research, by definition, will sometimes lead us down blind alleys and—but it will also tell us what we don't know, which then helps us figure out new pathways. And when things do pay off, then they create economic opportunities in ways that we could never imagine.

So Francis—Dr. Collins here—helped lead the Human Genome Project, and we've got a number of people here who are deeply involved in that process. And one study found that every dollar we spent to map the human genome has already returned $140 to our economy. There's a huge economic stake in us tapping into this innovation. [*Applause*] Nothing wrong with clapping about that. Yes.

But as anybody who's ever watched a loved one battle with an illness, particularly a life-threatening illness—and I suspect that there's nobody here who hasn't been touched in some fashion by that experience—what everybody here understands is that the most important impact these investments can have can't be measured in dollars. If we have an opportunity to prevent hurt and heartbreak for more families; if we have the opportunity to help people live longer, happier, healthier lives; if we have the chance to make sure that a young person like Elana, who, stricken by a disease before their life has even really gotten going, if we have a chance to make sure that they're okay and cured and then able to make incredible contributions to our society, then we've got to seize that. We've got to go after that.

And that's why we're here today. Because something called precision medicine—in some cases, people call it personalized medicine—gives us one of the greatest opportunities for new medical breakthroughs that we have ever seen. Doctors have always recognized that every patient is unique, and doctors have always tried to tailor their treatments as best they can to individuals. You can match a blood transfusion to a blood type. That was an important discovery. What if matching a cancer cure to our genetic code was just as easy, just as standard? What if figuring out the right dose of medicine was as simple as taking our temperature?

And that's the promise of precision medicine: delivering the right treatments, at the right time, every time, to the right person. And for a small, but growing, number of patients, that future is already here. Eight out of 10 people with one type of leukemia saw white blood cell counts return to normal with a new drug targeting a specific gene. Genetic testing for

HIV patients helps doctors determine who will be helped by a new antiviral drug and who will experience harmful side effects.

And advances in technology means these breakthroughs could be just the beginning. The year Dr. Collins helped sequence the first human genome, it cost about $100 million dollars, and today it costs less than $2,000. Wearable electronics make it easier than ever to record vital signs from your blood sugar to your heart rate. Electronic medical records let doctors and researchers across the country collaborate more closely than ever before. And more powerful computers help us analyze data faster than ever before.

So if we combine all these emerging technologies, if we focus them and make sure that the connections are made, then the possibility of discovering new cures, the possibility of applying medicines more efficiently and more effectively so that the success rates are higher, so that there's less waste in the system, which then means more resources to help more people—the possibilities are boundless. So the time is right to unleash a new wave of advances in this area, in precision medicine, just like we did with genetics 25 years ago.

And the really good news—this is how you know that the moment is right—is, there's bipartisan support for the idea—[*laughter*]—here in Washington. Which makes me very happy. [*Laughter*] When I was a Senator back in 2005, I worked with Republican Senator Richard Burr on a bill supporting precision medicine. Newly elected Republican Senator Bill Cassidy—who also happens to be a gastroenterologist—recently called precision medicine "an incredible area of promise."

And that's why the budget I send this Congress on Monday will include a new precision medicine initiative that brings America closer to curing diseases like cancer and diabetes and gives all of us access, potentially, to the personalized information that we need to keep ourselves and our families healthier.

So let me just outline the facets of this. First, we're going to work with the National Cancer Institute. We want to find the genetic factors that can lead to cancer. And we want to use that knowledge to develop new and more effective approaches to help people beat this disease.

Second, we're going to work with the FDA to develop new approaches for evaluating next-generation genetic tests. The way we approve a new gene-sequencing technology is going to be different than the way we approve a new pacemaker or prosthetic device. And we need to make sure that our approach reflects the differences in technology.

Third, we're going to work with the National Institutes of Health to create a research group of 1 million volunteers. And just like analyzing our DNA teaches us more about who we are than ever before, analyzing data from one of the largest research populations ever assembled will teach us more about the connections between us than ever before. And this new information will help doctors discover the causes—and one day the cures—of some of the most deadly diseases that we face. So if we have a big data set, a big pool of people that's varied, then that allows us to really map out not only the genome of one person, but now we can start seeing connections and patterns and correlations that helps us refine exactly what it is that we're trying to do with respect to treatment.

And finally, we're going to make sure that protecting patient privacy is built into our efforts from day one. And I'm proud we have so many patients' rights advocates with us here today. They're not going to be on the sidelines. It's not going to be an afterthought. They'll help us design this initiative from the ground up, making sure that we harness new technologies and opportunities in a responsible way.

So the precision medicine initiative we're launching today will lay the foundation for a new generation of lifesaving discoveries. But in order for us to realize its potential, I'm asking more hospitals and researchers and privacy experts to join us in this effort. And I'm asking entrepreneurs and nonprofits to help us create tools that give patients the chance to get involved as well. Because we want every American ultimately to be able to securely access and analyze their own health data so that they can

make the best decisions for themselves and for their families.

And ultimately, this has the possibility of not only helping us find new cures, but it also helps us create a genuine health care system as opposed to just a disease care system. Part of what we want to do is to allow each of us to have sufficient information about our particular quirks—[*laughter*]—that we can make better life decisions. And that, ultimately, is one of the most promising aspects about this: making sure that we've got a system that focuses on prevention and keeping healthy, not just on curing diseases after they happen.

Medical breakthroughs take time, and this area of precision medicine will be no different. But the patients with us this morning are living proof that the dawn of a new era has arrived. If we start today and seize this moment and the focus and the energy and the resources that it demands, there is no telling how many lives we could change. And every single one of those lives matter.

Bill Elder was one of Michelle's guests at the State of the Union last week. Where's Bill? Here he is. Stand up, Bill. So Bill's a good-looking young guy. [*Laughter*] And about 20 years ago, Bill was diagnosed with cystic fibrosis. But it turns out, Bill is one of 4 percent of cystic fibrosis patients whose disease is caused by a particular mutation in one gene. And a few years ago, the FDA fast-tracked a new drug targets—specifically targeting that mutation. And one night in 2012, Bill tried it for the first time. And just a few hours later, he woke up knowing something was different, and finally, he realized what it was: He had never been able to breathe out of his nose before. Think about that.

So Bill is now 27. When he was born, 27 was the median age of survival for a cystic fibrosis patient. Today, Bill is in his third year of medical school. "And for the first time in my life," Bill said—for the first time in his life, he says, "I truly believe that I will live long enough to be a grandfather." One day, Bill will be able to tell his grandchildren about how he used the miracle of his own life to not only serve as an example, but also an inspiration and ultimately a pathway for his own career to help save the lives of other people.

And that's the spirit of hope and resilience and community that's always carried America forward. We may disagree sometimes, especially here in Washington, but we do share a common vision for our future. We want an economy powered by the world's best innovations, the best ideas. We want a country that extends its promise of opportunity to everybody who's willing to work for it. We want to have a nation in which the accidents and circumstances of our birth aren't determining our fate, and that if born with a particular disease or a particular genetic makeup that makes us more vulnerable to something, that that's not our destiny, that's not our fate—that we can remake it. That's who we are as Americans, and that's the power of scientific discovery.

And we want Bill's generation and the generations that come after to inherit that most extraordinary gift anybody can imagine, and that is not just a chance to live a long and happy and healthy life in this greatest country on Earth, but also the chance to remake that world continuously, in ways that provide great promise for future generations. So I'm very excited about this. I hope you are too.

Thank you, everybody. God bless you. God bless the United States. Let's get to work.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:19 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Elana Simon, student, Harvard University; Harold E. Varmus, Director, National Cancer Institute; and William Elder, Jr., student, Wright State University Boonshoft School of Medicine.

The President's Weekly Address
January 31, 2015

Hi, everybody. At a moment when our economy is growing, our businesses are creating jobs at the fastest pace since the 1990s, and wages are starting to rise again, we have to make some choices about the kind of country we want to be. Will we accept an economy where only a few of us do spectacularly well? Or will we build an economy where everyone who works hard has a chance to get ahead?

That was the focus of my State of the Union Address: middle class economics, the idea that this country does best when everyone gets their fair shot, everyone does their fair share, and everyone plays by the same set of rules.

This week, I will send a budget to Congress that's built on those values. We'll help working families' paychecks go farther by treating things like paid leave and childcare like the economic priorities that they are. We'll offer Americans of every age the chance to upgrade their skills so they can earn higher wages, with plans like making 2 years of community college free for every responsible student. And we'll keep building the world's most attractive economy for high-wage jobs, with new investments in research, infrastructure, manufacturing, and expanded access to faster Internet and new markets.

We can afford to make these investments. Since I took office, we've cut our deficits by about two-thirds, the fastest sustained deficit reduction since just after the end of World War II. We just have to be smarter about how we pay for our priorities, and that's what my budget does. It proposes getting rid of special interest loopholes in our Tax Code and using those savings to cut taxes for middle class families and reward businesses that invest in America. It refuses to play politics with our homeland security and funds our national security priorities at home and abroad. And it undoes the arbitrary, across-the-board budget cuts known as the sequester for our domestic priorities and matches those investments dollar for dollar in resources our troops need to get the job done.

Now, I know there are Republicans in Congress who disagree with my approach. And like I said in my State of the Union, if they have ideas that will help middle class families feel some economic security, I'm all in to work with them. But I will keep doing everything I can to help more working families make ends meet and get ahead—not just because we want everyone to share in America's success, but because we want everyone to contribute to America's success.

That's the way the middle class thrived in the last century, and that's how it will thrive again.

Thanks, everybody, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 5:15 p.m. on January 30 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast on January 31. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 30, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on January 31.

Statement on the Presidential Election in Italy
January 31, 2015

I congratulate President Sergio Mattarella on his election as President of Italy and applaud his distinguished record of public service. Drawing on the enduring bond between the United States and Italy, I look forward to working with President Mattarella to address transatlantic and global challenges and seize new opportunities for close cooperation.

Statement on the Death of Kenji Goto
January 31, 2015

The United States condemns the heinous murder of Japanese citizen and journalist Kenji Goto by the terrorist group ISIL. Through his reporting, Mr. Goto courageously sought to convey the plight of the Syrian people to the outside world. Our thoughts are with Mr. Goto's family and loved ones, and we stand today in solidarity with Prime Minister Abe and the Japanese people in denouncing this barbaric act. We applaud Japan's steadfast commitment to advancing peace and prosperity in the Middle East and globally, including its generous assistance for innocent people affected by the conflicts in the region. Standing together with a broad coalition of allies and partners, the United States will continue taking decisive action to degrade and ultimately destroy ISIL.

NOTE: The statement referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

Remarks on the Federal Budget
February 2, 2015

The President. Thank you so much. Thank you, everybody. Please, have a seat. Well, good morning, everybody.

Audience members. Good morning.

The President. It is good to be here at the Department of Homeland Security. And let me thank Jeh Johnson not only for the outstanding job that's he's doing as Secretary of DHS, but also for a short introduction. I like short introductions. [*Laughter*] Give him a big round of applause.

This is a great way to start the week, because I get to do something I enjoy doing, which is saying thank you. Nobody works harder to keep America safe than the people who are gathered here today. And you don't get a lot of attention for it. That's the nature of the job. But I know how vital you are, and I want to make sure that more Americans know how vital you are. Because against just about every threat that we face—from terrorist networks to microscopic viruses, to cyber attacks, to weather disasters—you guys are there. You protect us from threats at home and abroad, by air and land and sea. You safeguard our ports, you patrol our borders. You inspect our chemical plants, screen travelers for Ebola, shield our computer networks, help hunt down criminals from around the world. You have a busy agenda, a full plate. And here at home, you are ready to respond to any emergency at a moment's notice.

It is simply extraordinary how much the Department of Homeland Security does every single day to keep our Nation, our people, safe. It's a critical job, and you get it done with not—without a lot of fanfare. And I want to make sure that you have what you need to keep getting the job done. Every American has an interest in making sure that the Department of Homeland Security has what it needs to achieve its mission, because we are reliant on that mission every single day.

Now, today I'm sending Congress a budget that will make sure you've got what you need to achieve your mission. It gives you the resources you need to carry out your mission in a way that is smart and strategic and makes the most of every dollar. It's also a broader blueprint for America's success in this new global economy. Because after a breakthrough year for America—at a time when our economy is growing and our businesses are creating jobs at the fastest pace since the 1990s and wages are starting to rise again—we've got some fundamental choices to make about the kind of country we want to be.

Will we accept an economy where only a few of us do spectacularly well? Or are we go-

ing to build an economy where everyone who works hard has a chance to get ahead?

And that was the focus of my State of the Union Address a couple weeks ago, what I called middle class economics: the idea that this country does best when everybody gets a fair shot and everybody is doing their fair share and everybody plays by the same set of rules.

The budget that Congress now has in its hands is built on those values. It helps working families' paychecks go farther by treating things like paid sick leave and childcare as the economic priorities that they are. It gives Americans of every age the chance to upgrade their skills so they can earn higher wages, and it includes my plan to make 2 years of community college free for responsible students. It lets us keep building the world's most attractive economy for high-wage jobs, with new investments in research and infrastructure and manufacturing, as well as expanded access to faster Internet and new markets for goods made in America.

It's also a budget that recognizes that our economy flourishes when America is safe and secure. So it invests in our IT networks to protect them from malicious actors. It supports our troops and strengthens our border security. And it gives us the resources to confront global challenges, from ISIL to Russian aggression.

Now, since I took office, we have cut our deficits by about two-thirds. I'm going to repeat that, as I always do when I mention this fact, because the public oftentimes, if you ask them, thinks that the deficit has shot up. Since I took office, we have cut our deficits by about two-thirds. That's the fastest period of sustained deficit reduction since after the demobilization at the end of World War II. So we can afford to make these investments while remaining fiscally responsible. And in fact, we cannot afford—we would be making a critical error if we avoided making these investments. We can't afford not to. When the economy is doing well, we're making investments when we're growing. That's part of what keeps deficits low, because the economy is doing well. So we've just got to be smarter about how we pay for our priorities, and that's what my budget does.

At the end of 2013, I signed a bipartisan budget agreement that helped us end some of the arbitrary cuts known in Washington-speak as "sequestration." And folks here at DHS know a little too much about sequestration—[*laughter*]—because many of you had to deal with those cuts and the uncertainty around them and it made it a lot harder for you to do your jobs.

The 2013 agreement to reverse some of those cuts helped to boost our economic growth. Part of the reason why we grew faster last year was we were no longer being burdened by mindless across-the-board cuts, and we were being more strategic about how we handled our Federal budget. And now we need to take the next step. So my budget will end sequestration and fully reverse the cuts to domestic priorities in 2016. And it will match the investments that were made domestically, dollar for dollar, with increases in our defense funding.

And just last week, top military officials told Congress that if Congress does nothing to stop sequestration, there could be serious consequences for our national security, at a time when our military is stretched on a whole range of issues. And that's why I want to work with Congress to replace mindless austerity with smart investments that strengthen America. And we can do so in a way that is fiscally responsible.

I'm not going to accept a budget that locks in sequestration going forward. It would be bad for our security and bad for our growth. I will not accept a budget that severs the vital link between our national security and our economic security. I know there's some on Capitol Hill who would say, well, we'd be willing to increase defense spending, but we're not going to increase investments in infrastructure, for example, or basic research. Well, those two things go hand in hand. If we don't have a vital infrastructure, if we don't have broadband lines across the country, if we don't have a smart grid, all that makes us more vulnerable.

America can't afford being shortsighted, and I'm not going to allow it.

The budget I've sent to Congress today is fully paid for, through a combination of smart spending cuts and tax reforms. Let me give you an example. Right now our Tax Code is full of loopholes for special interests, like the trust fund loophole that allows the wealthiest Americans to avoid paying taxes on their unearned income. I think we should fix that and use the savings to cut taxes for middle class families. That would be good for our economy.

Now, I know there are Republicans who disagree with my approach. And I've said this before: If they have other ideas for how we can keep America safe, grow our economy, while helping middle class families feel some sense of economic security, I welcome their ideas. But their numbers have to add up. And what we can't do is play politics with folks' economic security or with our national security. You, better than anybody, know what the stakes are. The work you do hangs in the balance.

And just a few weeks from now, funding for Homeland Security will run out. That's not because of anything this Department did, it's because the Republicans in Congress who funded everything in Government through September, except for this Department. And they're now threatening to let Homeland Security funding expire because of their disagreement with my actions to make our immigration system smarter, fairer, and safer.

Now, let's be clear, I think we can have a reasonable debate about immigration. I'm confident that what we're doing is the right thing and the lawful thing. I understand they may have some disagreements with me on that, although I should note that a large majority—or a large percentage of Republicans agree that we needed comprehensive immigration reform and were prepared to act in the Senate and should have acted in the House. But if they don't agree with me, that's fine, that's how our democracy works. You may have noticed, they usually don't agree with me. [*Laughter*] But don't jeopardize our national security over this disagreement.

As one Republican put it, if they let your funding run out, "it's not the end of the world." That's what they said. Well, I guess literally that's not—that's true; it may not be the end of the world. But until they pass a funding bill, it is the end of a paycheck for tens of thousands of frontline workers who will continue to get—to have to work without getting paid: over 40,000 Border Patrol and Customs agents, over 50,000 airport screeners, over 13,000 immigration officers, over 40,000 men and women in the Coast Guard. These Americans aren't just working to keep us safe, they have to take care of their own families. The notion that they would get caught up in a disagreement around policy that has nothing to do with them makes no sense.

And if Republicans let Homeland Security funding expire, it's the end to any new initiatives in the event that a new threat emerges. It's the end of grants to States and cities that improve local law enforcement and keep our communities safe. The men and women of America's homeland security apparatus do important work to protect us, and Republicans and Democrats in Congress should not be playing politics with that.

We need to fund the Department, pure and simple. We've got to put politics aside, pass a budget that funds our national security priorities at home and abroad and gives middle class families the security they need to get ahead in the new economy. This is one of our most basic and most important responsibilities as a government. So I'm calling on Congress to get this done.

Every day, we count on people like you to keep America secure. And you are counting on us as well to uphold our end of the bargain. You're counting on us to make sure that you've got the resources to do your jobs safely and efficiently and that you're able to look after your families while you are out there working really hard to keep us safe.

We ask a lot of you. The least we can do is have your backs. That's what I'm going to keep on doing for as long as I have the honor of serving as your President. I have your back. And I'm going to keep on fighting to make sure that

you get the resources you deserve. I'm going to keep fighting to make sure that every American has the chance not just to share in America's success, but to contribute to America's success. That's what this budget is about.

It reflects our values in making sure that we are making the investments we need to keep America safe, to keep America growing, and to make sure that everybody is participating no matter what they look like, where they come from, no matter how they started in life, they've got a chance to get ahead in this great country of ours. That's what I believe. That's what you believe. Let's get it done.

Thank you. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:27 a.m. at the Department of Homeland Security. In his remarks, he referred to Rep. Mario R. Díaz-Balart. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

Remarks Honoring the 2014 Stanley Cup Champion Los Angeles Kings and the 2014 Major League Soccer Champion Los Angeles Galaxy
February 2, 2015

Welcome to the White House! After Super Bowl Sunday, we thought we'd help America ease back into the work week with some more sports. [*Laughter*] So let's give it up for the Stanley Cup Champion L.A. Kings and the Major League Soccer Champion L.A. Galaxy.

We have NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman here; give him a big round of applause. MLS Commissioner Don Garber is in the house. We've got also Dan Beckerman, the president and CEO of AEG, the company that owns both of these championship teams. And of course, we've got Kings and Galaxy management and Kings Coach Darryl Sutter and Galaxy Coach Bruce Arena. Give them a big round of applause.

Now, as a Chicago fan, I'm a little resentful. [*Laughter*] You guys have an embarrassment of riches. Today feels a little like "Groundhog Day." If you're feeling a little déjà vu, you're not alone. Two years ago, we had the Galaxy and the Kings here together. So if you see Bill Murray playing the piano in the foyer, you know something weird is going on, and we're probably going to do this again.

This is actually three titles in 4 years for the Galaxy. It is their fifth Cup overall, more than any other franchise in MLS. And it will be the last one for the greatest soccer players America has ever produced, Landon Donovan, who unfortunately couldn't make it today. But everybody knows this team is a whole lot more than just Landon. There's league MVP Robbie Keane and Robbie Rogers. Apparently, there's some other guys not named Robbie—[*laughter*]—like Omar Gonzalez from Team U.S.A. And Juninho and Leonardo, two guys who've got that Brazilian one-name thing going, which is always very cool. [*Laughter*]

Now, this season wasn't a perfect storybook. The Galaxy started out the season in the cellar, then fought their way back into the playoffs. And then, in the MLS Cup against New England, the game went into extra time when Robbie Keane's goal gave them their latest title.

And I was just telling these guys backstage the degree to which they represent their sports so well, and America is starting to realize what the Beautiful Game is all about. And it is wonderful to see not just what's happening at the highest levels of professional sports, but how legions of young people are going to be continuing the traditions here in the United States with soccer for many years to come.

Now, like the Galaxy, the Kings needed overtime to win their championship; they needed two of them, in fact. And that was the easy part: Just to get to the Finals, the Kings had to win three straight Game Sevens—all on the road. They dug themselves out of a 3–0 hole against San Jose in the first round; they're laughing because they're thinking, man, let's

try to do it easier next time. [*Laughter*] In the Conference Final, they beat my Blackhawks, which is unfortunate. [*Laughter*] I mean, first of all, in L.A., there's not even any ice really. [*Laughter*] So you'd think, like, Chicago, where it's probably 10 degrees below zero today, at least, we'd get some hockey. But I mean, we've won a couple, so I can't complain.

The Kings have done the unthinkable: They have turned a city with no snow and no ice and no winter into a hockey town—[*laughter*]—complete with an outdoor game in Dodgers Stadium. They have done it with a team that L.A. fans have embraced, guys like goalie Jonathan Quick, playoff MVP Justin Williams. The first line of Brown and Kopitar and Gaborik, and Jeff Carter and his "hockey smile." And of course, Coach Sutter and his one-liners with the press. [*Laughter*] I've tried those one-liners, by the way, with the press, and it never seems to work. [*Laughter*]

I've also got to mention that in the middle of their season, a lot of these guys played for their national teams at Sochi, and we were proud to have Jonathan Quick and Dustin Brown wearing the red, white, and blue on behalf of Team U.S.A. Very proud of them.

And that's just one example of how these teams represent more than the colors they wear for the Kings or the Galaxy. Both teams are major supporters of Children's Hospital Los Angeles. The Kings have partnered with Discovery Cube L.A., a local museum, on an exhibit called "The Science of Hockey" to give kids a mental and physical workout. Galaxy players served meals to more than 2,000 families at Thanksgiving, and the organization built a soccer field for the community to use in South L.A.

And finally, I want to recognize what Robbie Rogers of the Galaxy has done for a lot of people by blazing a trail as one of professional sports' first openly gay players. My guess is that, as an athlete, Robbie wants to win first and foremost. That's what competition is all about. But, Robbie, you've also inspired a whole lot of folks here and around the world, and we are very proud of you. So where's Robbie? There he is.

So congratulations to both of these teams, to the City of Los Angeles, and its fans. And best of luck when you are not playing Chicago. [*Laughter*]

Thank you, everybody. We're going to strike the podium and get some pictures. Come on.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:22 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to actor William J. Murray; Landon T. Donovan and Robert D. Keane, forwards, Robert H. Rogers III and Vitor Gomes "Juninho" Pereira Júnior, midfielders, Omar Gonzalez and José Leonardo Ribeiro da Silva, defenders, Los Angeles Galaxy; and Justin Williams and Dustin Brown, right wings, Marian Gaborik, left wing, and Anze Kopitar and Jeff Carter, centers, Los Angeles Kings.

Remarks at a Roundtable Discussion With Beneficiaries of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act and an Exchange With Reporters
February 3, 2015

The President. Well, we are here with a bunch of folks who took the time to come to Washington, DC, and tell me face to face stories that they have told me in letters that they've written over the course of the last year. Everybody here has directly benefited from the Affordable Care Act, and it's a pretty good representative sample of people whose lives have been impacted in powerful ways.

You have folks like Tonya and Regina and Don, who had cancer, in some cases, before the Affordable Care Act was passed and were having trouble getting insurance. And because we no longer allow insurance companies to bar people because they've got preexisting conditions, they were now able to get health insurance and have the security and relief that was needed.

Regina said, for the first time since she was 12 years old, when she was first diagnosed with cancer, she felt free and now is planning her wedding with her fiancé. Tonya, who shortly after signing up for the ACA, in a checkup was diagnosed with a brain tumor, would not have even discovered it had it not been for the Affordable Care Act, and certainly would not have been able to afford treatments. The same is true for Don, who, as a consequence of regular checkups, in a colonoscopy that was part of the prevention regimen in the Affordable Care Act, was able to catch a tumor early and is now cancer-free.

We also have people who were able to benefit from Medicaid expansion under the Affordable Care Act. So Ann in Connecticut, Derrick in California, both were able to get on a plan that they could afford, even as they were working, even as they were taking care of families, and as a consequence, are healthier for it. Ann was able to catch breast cancer early.

We have small-businesspeople, like Lynette over here and Darlene, who, because they weren't working for a company, had a tough time affording the premiums. And Lynette saved herself about $300-and-something a month in premiums, and Lynette is—was able to cut her premiums in half. And she's got a cupcake company, I think—[*laughter*]—and she says she brought some samples, but Secret Service may have gotten them. [*Laughter*]

Maria, a teacher in Fairfax, Virginia; Naomi, a farmer down in Roberta, Georgia—both of them were able to benefit from greatly reduced premiums and, as a consequence, are able to maintain their health and pay their bills at the same time.

And then, Susanne has got a wonderful story. She's a doctor in rural Virginia—rural West Virginia. And not only are her and her sister able to benefit from the Affordable Care Act, but more importantly for her, patients that she had been seeing for years who would forego critical treatments are now able to pay for the tests and the medication that they need to maintain their health.

And so the bottom line is that the Affordable Care Act is not an abstraction. The debate about making sure that every person in America is able to get basic, high-quality, affordable health care is not some political, ideological battle. It's about people. And for someone like Regina, who was diagnosed at the age of 12 with cancer, to have a sense of security so that she was able to finish college and is able now to plan her life, that is something that we should expect a country as wealthy as ours is providing to every person, to every citizen. And the idea that we would even consider taking that away from Regina or Tonya or Susanne's patients makes absolutely no sense.

Now, the good news is that we have over 10 million people who've now signed up under the Federal exchanges and millions more who are signing up from the expanded Medicaid that's taking place in States all across the country. And those are millions of people who are saving money, millions of people who are getting preventive care, millions of people who feel for the first time, in some cases, the security of knowing that if something goes wrong in their families or with them that they're covered, that somebody has got their backs, that they're not going to be bankrupt, that they're not going to have to split the pills that have been prescribed in half because that's all they can afford. They can continue with their professions or their schooling. And it makes this country more productive. It's good for all of us.

So my understanding is, the House of Representatives has scheduled yet another vote today to take health care away from the folks sitting around this table. I don't know whether it's the 55th or the 60th time that they are taking this vote. But I've asked this question before: Why is it that this would be at the top of their agenda, making sure that folks who don't have health care aren't able to get it?

It was maybe plausible to be opposed to the Affordable Care Act before it was implemented, but now it is being implemented and it is working. And people are being covered, just as anticipated. The premiums on average are less than a hundred dollars when you take into account the tax credit, so it is affordable for the people that it was designed to help. Health care inflation is at its lowest rate in 50 years.

The overall tab for the Affordable Care Act is costing less than the original projections.

In every respect, this is working not just as intended, but better than intended. And so the notion that we would play politics with the lives of folks who are out there working hard every single day, trying to make ends meet, trying to look after their families, makes absolutely no sense. And that's a message that I wanted to send very directly today.

I've got a second interest here, and that is that we still have the opportunity for millions of more people to sign up. The deadline for signing up for 2015 is February 15. So we've got a little over a week for people to sign up. For the cost of less than your cell phone bill or your cable bill, you can have the same kind of health security that the folks around this table do.

And I want to remind everybody—Ann told the story that she really didn't think she needed health insurance, ended up getting it because she heard that there was a fee involved if she didn't get it, ended up purchasing it—or ended up getting—finding out she was qualified for Medicaid because of the expanded Medicaid in Connecticut, and it was only after she signed up that she discovered through a mammogram that she had breast cancer.

So it turns out that even if you think out there that you're not going to need health insurance, you very may well need it at some point in your life. And here's an opportunity to sign up.

So I want everybody to get on healthcare.gov, find out what options are available to you in your State and in your community. We have people around this table who are paying as little as $30 or $20 a month for premiums. Some are paying more, but again, the average is less than a hundred dollars a month. And that is something that a lot of folks out there can afford. And we've got millions of people who are still qualified who have a chance to sign up, but you've got to do it by February 15.

So get on healthcare.gov, look at what your options are. Don't take my word for it. But understand that this is something that can give you the kind of security and peace of mind that is priceless.

And to my friends up on Capitol Hill, I would just ask them once again to consider why they would think it an important priority to take away health care for some 10 million people, people who are working hard and, in many cases, through no fault of their own, got dealt a bad hand.

Regina, at the age of 12, wasn't asking to have a series of cancers. And anybody who has a chance to talk to her would know we want her to succeed. She's overcome incredible odds. Why would we want to take health care away from her? Why would we want to make it impossible for her to live out her life with some sense of security and peace of mind? It doesn't make any sense.

So I just want to thank everybody here for sharing their stories. I'm very proud of them, and I'm proud of the work that they're doing to help spread the word. But I hope all of you—since you've got a lot of cameras and microphones—spread the word as well. You've got to sign up by February 15.

Thank you very much, everybody.

Death of Jordanian Air Force Pilot Moaz al-Kasasbeh/Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) Terrorist Organization

Q. Mr. President, any reaction to the Jordanian pilot who, ISIS said, was burned alive?

The President. I just got word of the video that had been released. I don't know the details of the confirmations. But should, in fact, this video be authentic, it's just one more indication of the viciousness and barbarity of this organization. And it, I think, will redouble the vigilance and determination on the part of a global coalition to make sure that they are degraded and ultimately defeated.

And it also just indicates the degree to which, whatever ideology they're operating off of, it's bankrupt. We're here to talk about how to make people healthier and make their lives better, and this organization appears only interested in death and destruction.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:25 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. Par-

ticipating in the roundtable discussion were Dallas, TX, resident Tonya Fisher; Philadelphia, PA, resident Regina Moran; Phoenix, AZ, resident Don Kuk; Westport, CT, resident Ann Chrisman; San Francisco, CA, resident Derrick Benn; Hyattsville, MD, resident Lynette Jackson; Cary, NC, resident Darlene Whitted; Fairfax, VA, resident Maria Villavicencio; Roberta, GA, resident Naomi Rosan; and Morgantown, WV, resident Susanne Choby.

Remarks Prior to a Cabinet Meeting
February 3, 2015

This is my first opportunity to bring all the Cabinet here together for this year. And I, first of all, am going to be thanking all of them for the outstanding work they did last year to make 2014 a breakthrough year for America. What we saw was job growth, unemployment coming down, energy production up, clean energy production up, reduction in deficits, continued expansion of exports.

And as I said at the State of the Union, we are now poised to not just have recovered from the recession, but really to move forward in the 21st century in a better position than just about any country on Earth. But that requires we make some smart choices. Are we going to have a country where just a few do spectacularly well, or are we going to have a country where prosperity is broad based and we're making sure everybody has got a shot if they're willing to work hard? And that middle class economics is going to be a central theme of the work that every single agency does not just in the coming weeks or in the coming months, but for the remainder of my Presidency.

The budget that we put forward reflects those priorities. It makes sure that we're investing in infrastructure, in research, to continue to make us grow. It makes sure that we are providing tax credits and tax breaks to middle class families for their childcare expenses, to make sure that they're able to afford college educations for their kids. That includes the proposal I put forward for free community college, which can reduce the debt burdens for young people who know that they need the skills to succeed in the 21st century.

It's fully paid for through smart spending cuts, as well as tax reforms. It fully reverses the arbitrary cuts of recent years to domestic priorities in 2016 with dollar-for-dollar increases for defense. It's full of ideas that Republicans should embrace, like cutting taxes for middle class families. And one idea that they need to embrace right away is making sure that we're funding the Department of Homeland Security.

I talked about this yesterday, I want to reemphasize it today: The Department of Homeland Security contains numerous agencies that every single day are keeping the American people safe. They're our front lines at our borders, at our airports, along our coasts. And they need certainty in order to do their jobs. The notion that we would risk the effectiveness of the department that is charged with preventing terrorism, controlling our borders, making sure that the American people are safe, makes absolutely no sense. The idea that we would have members of the Coast Guard or our Border Control or TSA not being paid, and expect them to still be able to perform as effectively as we need them to perform, makes no sense. And the idea that we would do that because of a separate disagreement between myself and the Republicans about the need for comprehensive immigration reform, certainly is something that is not going to make sense to the American people.

So I'm encouraging Congress to go ahead and get a budget done for the Department of Homeland Security, make sure it's properly funded. And then I'm looking forward to engaging with all of them so that we can make sure that we've got a Government that is delivering for the American people and making sure that we are giving middle class families and everybody who's willing to work hard to get into the middle class the chance to get ahead.

And we're also going to have an opportunity in our Cabinet to talk about some administrative actions that we're taking to continue to make Government more efficient, more effective, and more customer friendly. And we've made some real progress on that front in every single agency, from the Veterans Administration to the Small Business Administration. I'm really excited about some of the things that we're going to be doing, saving taxpayers money and making sure that our organizations are tight, streamlined, and effective.

So I appreciate all the good work that all of you are doing. And I want to thank our press pool very much so we can get to work.

Thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:13 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House.

Statement on the Death of Moaz al-Kasasbeh
February 3, 2015

Today we join the people of Jordan in grieving the loss of one of their own, First Lieutenant Moaz al-Kasasbeh, cruelly and brutally killed by ISIL terrorists. On behalf of the American people, I offer my deepest condolences to Lieutenant al-Kasasbeh's family and loved ones, to the brave men and women of the Jordan Armed Forces, and to King Abdullah II and the people of Jordan.

Lieutenant al-Kasasbeh will forever personify the bravery of a true son of Jordan, one who honored his family and country by his 7 years of military service. Along with his compatriots and other Arab and international members of the coalition, Lieutenant al-Kasasbeh was in the vanguard of the effort to degrade and defeat the threat posed by ISIL.

Lieutenant al-Kasasbeh's dedication, courage, and service to his country and family represent universal human values that stand in opposition to the cowardice and depravity of ISIL, which has been so broadly rejected around the globe. As we grieve together, we must stand united, respectful of his sacrifice to defeat this scourge. Today, the coalition fights for everyone who has suffered from ISIL's inhumanity. It is their memory that invests us and our coalition partners with the undeterred resolve to see ISIL and its hateful ideology banished to the recesses of history.

NOTE: The statement referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Beneficiaries of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Policy
February 4, 2015

Well, I've just had a chance to meet with these six wonderful young people who represent the very best that this country has to offer. What sets them apart is that they all came here—were brought here by their parents—and, up until recently, have had a very difficult situation because of their immigration status.

The stories you hear from these young people are parents who aspired for a better life for their children; these folks coming here at the age of 4 months or 7 months or 9-year-olds or 10-year-olds, oftentimes not realizing that their status was any different than their classmates and their friends and their neighbors. In some cases, they didn't discover until they were about to go to college that there was a difference that might prevent them from giving back to their community and their country.

And because of the executive actions that we took with respect to "DREAM Act" kids, and because of the executive actions that I announced late last year with respect to many of their parents, what I've heard is lives transformed. Young people who didn't think it

would be possible for themselves to go to college suddenly are going to college. Young people who didn't think that it might be possible to start a business suddenly find themselves in a position to look at starting a business. Young people who have memories of their mothers weeping because they couldn't go to the funeral of their parent now are seeing the prospect, the hope, that their lives can stabilize and normalize in some way.

I don't think there's anybody in America who's had a chance to talk to these six young people or the young DREAMers all across the country who wouldn't find it in their heart to say these kids are American just like us and they belong here and we want to do right by them.

And so often in this immigration debate, it's an abstraction, and we don't really think about the human consequences of our positions. And part of the reason that I wanted to hear from these young people today, and part of the reason why I've heard from young DREAMers in the past, is because it's a constant reminder to me of why this is important.

Now, the House of Representatives recently passed a bill that would have these six young people deported. I think that's wrong. And I think most Americans would think it was wrong if they had a chance to meet these young people. And legislation is going to be going to the Senate that again tries to block these executive actions. I want to be as clear as possible: I will veto any legislation that got to my desk that took away the chance of these young people, who grew up here and who are prepared to contribute to this country, that would prevent them from doing so. And I am confident that I can uphold that veto.

So as we move forward in this debate over the next several months, the next year, the next year and a half, I would call on Members of Congress to think about all the talent that is already in this country, that is already working in many cases, is already making contributions—in some cases, are joining up in our military or are already starting businesses, are already attending school—and let's be true to our tradition as a nation of immigrants and as a nation of laws.

My strong preference is going to be to pass comprehensive immigration reform. And I know that there are Republicans out there who want to pass comprehensive immigration reform. In the Senate, they've shown that they are prepared to do the right thing. And rather than continue trying to go back to a system that everybody acknowledges was broken, let's move forward with the incredible promise that these young people represent.

Last point I'll make: There have been suggestions that we will not fund the Department of Homeland Security—which is responsible for patrolling our borders, as well as keeping our air travel safe, as well as patrolling our coasts—there's been talk about not funding that Department because of the disagreement around immigration reform. There's no logic to that position. Particularly for Republicans who claim that they are interested in strong border security, why would you cut off your nose to spite your face by defunding the very operations that are involved in making sure that we've got strong border security, particularly at a time when we've got real concerns about countering terrorism?

So my strong suggestion would be that Congress go ahead, fund the Department of Homeland Security. We're doing a tremendous amount of work at the borders. The concerns that people had about unaccompanied children tragically traveling from Central America, that spike has now diminished. We are below the levels that we were 2 years ago. We are working diligently with the Central American countries to make sure that young people there have hope and that their parents are getting a clear message of not sending them on this extraordinarily dangerous journey.

Let's make sure the Department of Homeland Security is properly funded, we're doing the right things at the borders, we're doing the right things with respect to our airports. And then let's get back to first principles and remind ourselves that each of these young people here are going to be doing incredible things on behalf of this country.

And to all the DREAMers who are out there and all those who qualified for my executive action, moving forward, I want you to know that I am confident in my ability to implement this program over the next 2 years, and I'm confident that the next President and the next Congress and the American people will ultimately recognize why this is the right thing to do. So I'm going to want all of you to get information so you can sign up if you qualify as well. All right?

Thank you very much, everybody. And thank you, guys, for sharing your incredible stories.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:47 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. Participating in the discussion were Jean Yannick Diouf, student, University of Maryland; Bati-amgalan Tsogtsaikhan, student, George Mason University; Maria Praeli, student, Quinnipiac University; Rishi Singh, educational justice organizer, DRUM–South Asian Organizing Center; Las Vegas, NV, resident Blanca Gamez; and Steven Arteaga Rodriguez, student, University of Houston. He also referred to H.R. 5759.

Statement on the Death of Charles L. Sifford
February 4, 2015

Michelle and I offer our condolences on the passing of golf legend Charlie Sifford. Charlie was the first African American to earn a PGA Tour card, often facing indignity and injustice even as he faced the competition. Though his best golf was already behind him, he proved that he belonged, winning twice on tour and blazing a trail for future generations of athletes in America. I was honored to award Charlie the Presidential Medal of Freedom last year, for altering the course of the sport and the country he loved. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family, his friends, and his fans.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Situation in or in Relation to Côte d'Ivoire
February 4, 2015

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency, unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13396 of February 7, 2006, with respect to the situation in or in relation to Côte d'Ivoire is to continue in effect beyond February 7, 2015.

The Government of Côte d'Ivoire and its people continue to make significant progress in promotion of democratic, social, and economic development. The United States also supports the advancement of impartial justice in Côte d'Ivoire as well as the Government of Côte d'Ivoire's efforts to prepare for a peaceful, fair, and transparent presidential election in 2015, which will be an important milestone in Côte d'Ivoire's progress. We urge all sides to work for the benefit of the country as a whole by rejecting violence and participating in the electoral process.

While the Government of Côte d'Ivoire and its people continue to make progress toward peace and prosperity, the situation in or in relation to Côte d'Ivoire continues to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. For these reasons, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency and related measures blocking the property of certain persons contributing to the conflict in Côte d'Ivoire.

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

The White House,
February 4, 2015.

Remarks at the National Prayer Breakfast
February 5, 2015

Thank you very much. Please, please. Thank you. Well, good morning. Giving all praise and honor to God. It is wonderful to be back with you here. I want to thank our cochairs, Bob and Roger. These two don't always agree in the Senate, but in coming together and uniting us all in prayer, they embody the spirit of our gathering today.

I also want to thank everybody who helped organize this breakfast. And it's wonderful to see so many friends and faith leaders and dignitaries, and Michelle and I are truly honored to be joining you here today.

I want to offer a special welcome to a good friend, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, who is a powerful example of what it means to practice compassion and who inspires us to speak up for the freedom and dignity of all human beings. I've been pleased to welcome him to the White House on many occasions, and we're grateful he's able to join us here today.

There aren't that many occasions that bring His Holiness under the same roof as NASCAR. [*Laughter*] This may be the first. [*Laughter*] But God works in mysterious ways. [*Laughter*] And so I want to thank Darrell for that wonderful presentation. Darrell knows that when you're going 200 miles an hour, a little prayer cannot hurt. [*Laughter*] I suspect that more than once, Darrell has had the same thought as many of us have in our own lives: Jesus, take the wheel. [*Laughter*] Although, I hope that you kept your hands on the wheel when you were thinking that. [*Laughter*]

He and I obviously share something in having married up. And we are so grateful to Stevie for the incredible work that they've done together to build a ministry where the fastest drivers can slow down a little bit and spend some time in prayer and reflection and thanks. And we certainly want to wish Darrell a happy birthday. [*Laughter*] So happy birthday.

I will note, though, Darrell, when you were reading that list of things folks were saying about you, that—I was thinking, well, you're a piker. I mean, that—[*laughter*]—I mean, if you really want a list, come talk to me. [*Laughter*] Because that ain't nothing. [*Laughter*] That's the best they can do at NASCAR? [*Laughter*]

Slowing down and pausing for fellowship and prayer, that's what this breakfast is about. I think it's fair to say Washington moves a lot slower than NASCAR. Certainly, my agenda does sometimes. [*Laughter*] But still, it's easier to get caught up in the rush of our lives and in the political back and forth that can take over this city. And we get sidetracked with distractions, large and small. We can't go 10 minutes without checking our smartphones, and for my staff, that's every 10 seconds. And so for 63 years, this prayer tradition has brought us together, giving us the opportunity to come together in humility before the Almighty and to be reminded of what it is that we share as children of God.

And certainly for me, this is always a chance to reflect on my own faith journey. Many times as President, I've been reminded of a line of prayer that Eleanor Roosevelt was fond of. She said, "Keep us at tasks too hard for us that we may be driven to Thee for strength." Keep us at tasks too hard for us that we may be driven to Thee for strength. I've wondered at times if maybe God was answering that prayer a little too literally. [*Laughter*] But no matter the challenge, He has been there for all of us. He's certainly strengthened me "with the power through his Spirit," as I've sought His guidance not just in my own life, but in the life of our Nation.

Now, over the last few months, we've seen a number of challenges, certainly, over the last 6 years. But part of what I want to touch on today is the degree to which we've seen professions of faith used both as an instrument of great good, but also twisted and misused in the name of evil.

As we speak, around the world, we see faith inspiring people to lift up one another: to feed the hungry and care for the poor and comfort the afflicted and make peace where there is strife. We heard from—the good work that Sister has done in Philadelphia and the incredible work that Dr. Brantly and his colleagues have done. We see faith driving us to do right.

But we also see faith being twisted and distorted, used as a wedge, or worse, sometimes used as a weapon. From a school in Pakistan to the streets of Paris, we have seen violence and terror perpetrated by those who profess to stand up for faith, their faith; professed to stand up for Islam, but in fact, are betraying it. We see ISIL, a brutal, vicious death cult that, in the name of religion, carries out unspeakable acts of barbarism: terrorizing religious minorities like the Yazidis, subjecting women to rape as a weapon of war, and claiming the mantle of religious authority for such actions.

We see sectarian war in Syria, the murder of Muslims and Christians in Nigeria, religious war in the Central African Republic, a rising tide of anti-Semitism and hate crimes in Europe, so often perpetrated in the name of religion.

And so how do we, as people of faith, reconcile these realities, the profound good, the strength, the tenacity, the compassion, and love that can flow from all of our faiths, operating alongside those who seek to hijack religious for their own murderous ends?

Now, humanity has been grappling with these questions throughout human history. And lest we get on our high horse and think this is unique to some other place, remember that during the Crusades and the Inquisition, people committed terrible deeds in the name of Christ. In our home country, slavery and Jim Crow all too often was justified in the name of Christ. Michelle and I returned from India, an incredible, beautiful country, full of this magnificent diversity, but a place where, in past years, religious faiths of all types have, on occasion, been targeted by other peoples of faiths, simply due to their heritage and their beliefs, acts of intolerance that would have shocked Gandhiji, the person who helped to liberate that nation.

So this is not unique to one group or one religion. There is a tendency in us, a sinful tendency that can pervert and distort our faith. In today's world, when hate groups have their own Twitter accounts and bigotry can fester in hidden places in cyberspace, it can be even harder to counteract such intolerance. But God compels us to try. And in this mission, I believe there are a few principles that can guide us, particularly those of us who profess to believe.

And first, we should start with some basic humility. I believe that the starting point of faith is some doubt: not being so full of yourself and so confident that you are right and that God speaks only to us and doesn't speak to others, that God only cares about us and doesn't care about others, that somehow we alone are in possession of the truth.

Our job is not to ask that God respond to our notion of truth; our job is to be true to Him, His word, and His commandments. And we should assume humbly that we're confused and don't always know what we're doing and we're staggering and stumbling towards Him and have some humility in that process. And that means we have to speak up against those who would misuse His name to justify oppression or violence or hatred with that fierce certainty. No God condones terror. No grievance justifies the taking of innocent lives or the oppression of those who are weaker or fewer in number.

And so, as people of faith, we are summoned to push back against those who try to distort our religion—any religion—for their own nihilistic ends. And here at home and around the world, we will constantly reaffirm that fundamental freedom, freedom of religion: the right to practice our faith how we choose, to change our faith if we choose, to practice no faith at all

if we choose, and to do so free of persecution and fear and discrimination.

There's wisdom in our Founders writing in those documents that helped found this Nation the notion of freedom of religion, because they understood the need for humility. They also understood the need to uphold freedom of speech, that there was a connection between freedom of speech and freedom of religion. For to infringe on one right under the pretext of protecting another is a betrayal of both.

But part of humility is also recognizing in modern, complicated, diverse societies, the functioning of these rights, the concern for the protection of these rights calls for each of us to exercise civility and restraint and judgment. And if in fact we defend the legal right of a person to insult another's religion, we're equally obligated to use our free speech to condemn such insults and stand shoulder to shoulder with religious communities, particularly religious minorities who are the targets of such attacks. Just because you have the right to say something doesn't mean the rest of us shouldn't question those who would insult others in the name of free speech. Because we know that our nations are stronger when people of all faiths feel that they are welcome, that they too are full and equal members of our countries.

So humility, I think, is needed. And the second thing we need is to uphold the distinction between our faith and our governments, between church and between state. The United States is one of the most religious countries in the world, far more religious than most Western developed countries. And one of the reasons is that our Founders wisely embraced the separation of church and state. Our Government does not sponsor a religion, nor does it pressure anyone to practice a particular faith or any faith at all. And the result is a culture where people of all backgrounds and beliefs can freely and proudly worship, without fear or coercion. So that when you listen to Darrell talk about his faith journey, you know it's real. You know he's not saying it because it helps him advance or because somebody told him to. It's from the heart.

That's not the case in theocracies that restrict people's choice of faith. It's not the case in authoritarian governments that elevate an individual leader or a political party above the people or, in some cases, above the concept of God Himself. So the freedom of religion is a value we will continue to protect here at home and stand up for around the world and is one that we guard vigilantly here in the United States.

Last year, we joined together to pray for the release of Christian missionary Kenneth Bae, held in North Korea for 2 years. And today we give thanks that Kenneth is finally back where he belongs, home with his family.

Last year, we prayed together for a pastor, Saeed Abedini, detained in Iran since 2012. And I was recently in Boise, Idaho, and had the opportunity to meet with Pastor Abedini's beautiful wife and wonderful children and to convey to them that our country has not forgotten brother Saeed and that we're doing everything we can to bring him home. And then, I received an extraordinary letter from Pastor Abedini. And in it, he describes his captivity and expressed his gratitude for my visit with his family and thanked us all for standing in solidarity with him during his captivity.

And Pastor Abedini wrote, "Nothing is more valuable to the Body of Christ than to see how the Lord is in control and moves ahead of countries and leadership through united prayer." And he closed his letter by describing himself as "prisoner for Christ, who is proud to be part of this great nation of the United States of America that cares for religious freedom around the world."

And we're going to keep up this work, for Pastor Abedini and all those around the world who are unjustly held or persecuted because of their faith. And we're grateful to our new Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom, Rabbi David Saperstein, who has hit the ground running and is heading to Iraq in a few days to help religious communities there address some of those challenges. Where's David? I know he's here somewhere. Thank you, David, for the great work you're doing.

Humility. A suspicion of government getting between us and our faiths or trying to dictate our faiths or elevate one faith over another. And finally, let's remember that if there is one law that we can all be most certain of that seems to bind people of all faiths and people who are still finding their way towards faith, but have a sense of ethics and morality in them—that one law, that Golden Rule that we should treat one another as we wish to be treated. The Torah says, "Love thy neighbor as yourself." In Islam, there is a hadith that states: "None of you truly believes until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself." The Holy Bible tells us to "put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony." Put on love.

Whatever our beliefs, whatever our traditions, we must seek to be instruments of peace, and bringing light where there is darkness and sowing love where there is hatred. And this is the loving message of His Holiness Pope Francis. And like so many people around the world, I've been touched by his call to relieve suffering and to show justice and mercy and compassion to the most vulnerable, to walk with the Lord and ask, "Who am I to judge?" He challenged us to press on in what he calls our "march of living hope." And like millions of Americans, I am very much looking forward to welcoming Pope Francis to the United States later this year.

His Holiness expresses that basic law: Treat thy neighbor as yourself. The Dalai Lama—anybody who's had an opportunity to be with him senses that same spirit. Kent Brantly expresses that same spirit. Kent was with Samaritan's Purse, treating Ebola patients in Liberia, when he contracted the virus himself. And with world-class medical care and deep reliance on faith, with God's help, Kent survived.

And then, by donating his plasma, he helped others survive as well. And he continues to advocate for a global response in West Africa, reminding us that "our efforts need to be on loving the people there." And I could not have been prouder to welcome Kent and his wonderful wife Amber to the Oval Office. We are blessed to have him here today, because he reminds us of what it means to really "love thy neighbor as thyself." Not just words, but deeds.

So each of us has a role in fulfilling our common and greater purpose: not merely to seek high position, but to plumb greater depths so that we may find the strength to love more fully. And this is perhaps our greatest challenge: to see our own reflection in each other, to be our brother's keepers and sister's keepers, and to keep faith with one another. As children of God, let's make that our work, together.

As children of God, let's work to end injustice: the injustice of poverty and hunger. No one should ever suffer from such want amidst such plenty. As children of God, let's work to eliminate the scourge of homelessness, because as Sister Mary says, "None of us are home until all of us are home." None of us are home until all of us are home.

As children of God, let's stand up for the dignity and value of every woman and man and child, because we are all equal in His eyes, and work to send the scourge and the sin of modern-day slavery and human trafficking and "set the oppressed free."

If we are properly humble, if we drop to our knees on occasion, we will acknowledge that we never fully know God's purpose. We can never fully fathom His amazing grace. "We see through a glass, darkly," grappling with the expanse of His awesome love. But even with our limits, we can heed that which is required: to do justice and love kindness and walk humbly with our God.

And I pray that we will. And as we journey together on this "march of living hope," I pray that, in His name, we will run and not be weary and walk and not be faint and we'll heed those words and "put on love."

May the Lord bless you and keep you, and may He bless this precious country that we love.

Thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:13 a.m. at the Washington Hilton hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Sens. Robert P. Casey, Jr., and Roger F. Wicker, in their capacity as cochairs, and former NASCAR driver Darrell L. Wal-

trip, in his capacity as keynote speaker, of the National Prayer Breakfast; Stevie Waltrip, wife of Mr. Waltrip; Sister Mary Scullion, executive director, Project HOME; and Naghmeh Abedini, wife of Saeed Abedini, a U.S. citizen imprisoned in Iran, and their children Jacob and Rebekka. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session at a Town Hall Meeting at Ivy Tech Community College in Indianapolis, Indiana
February 6, 2015

The President. Thank you, everybody! Hello, Hoosiers! Thank you so much. Well, please, everybody, have a seat. Have a seat. Let me begin by saying thank you to Mayor Ballard for that introduction, for all the great work you're doing for the people of Indianapolis, and for your service as a marine. We are very proud of the partnership that we've had with this city.

I also want to recognize Ivy Tech Chancellor Kathleen Lee and President Tom Snyder. Where are they? There they are over here. Some outstanding Members of Congress—Joe Donnelly, our Senator. Where's Joe? There he is. Congressman André Carson. And somebody who has been a great friend for the people of this State, the people of this Nation, a great friend to me personally, one of the people who have ensured that America is safe for so many years: former Senator and mayor of Indianapolis Dick Lugar. So—[*applause*].

On the way over here, Dick and I were reminiscing about—the first foreign trip I ever took was with Dick Lugar. He was the savvy veteran; I was the green-behind-the-ears freshman. We went to Russia. We were both interested in nuclear proliferation. He had really written the book on it. And Dick Lugar seems like a kind of relaxed guy, but if you're on a trip with him, he will wear you out. [*Laughter*] And then, at one point, we were actually held by a Russian colonel at the airport for about 3 hours, which normally might have made people nervous, but Dick, he'd been around the block a few times, so he just took a nap. [*Laughter*] It was fine. It got cleared up.

It is great to be back in Indiana, great to be back close to my home State. I respect the Pacers. [*Laughter*] But yes, I am a Bulls fan. [*Laughter*] I make no apologies. We've had some fierce, fierce rivalries in the past, and I'm looking forward to Mr. George and others getting back on track so we can have some more playoff runs.

But that's not all that I know about this State. One of my first trips as President was to Elkhart, and I stopped by some of your manufacturing plants. I played three-on-three at a school up in Kokomo, and my team won, by the way. [*Laughter*] When it comes to elections, I'm batting .500. I'm one for two, which isn't bad. The last time—I will acknowledge, the last time, I got kind of smoked here in Indiana. [*Laughter*] But that's okay. That's exactly why I wanted to come back. And I don't plan to take too long in the front because I want to make sure that we've got some time for questions.

But when I gave my State of the Union Address a couple of weeks ago, I repeated a vision that I originally laid out in Boston over a decade ago. And that's a vision that says there is no liberal America or conservative America, there's the United States of America. And I know that sometimes it seems like our politics are more divided than ever; that in parts of Indiana, the only blue you'll ever see is on Colts signs—[*laughter*]—and in Chicago, the only red is for the Chicago Bulls. But I still believe what I said back then: that we actually have so much more in common than not.

It doesn't always get focused on in our politics. And I've seen so much of the good, generous, big-hearted optimism of people across the country these past 6 years to give in to the cynicism that sometimes gets peddled as wisdom around the country.

And we've come a long way these past 6 years since we suffered the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression. This morning we found out that America's businesses added another 267,000 jobs. In 2014, our economy created more than 3.1 million jobs, and that's the best year of job growth since the 1990s. So all told, over the past 59 months, the private sector has added about 11.8 million—so that's almost 12 million—new jobs. And that's the longest streak of private sector job growth in our history.

Meanwhile, our deficits are shrinking. They've gone down by about two-thirds. Our dropout rates are down. Our graduation rates are up. We're as free of foreign oil as we've been in 30 years. We're—we've doubled the amount of clean energy that we're producing. A lot of families are saving a lot of money at the gas pump, which is putting some smiles on folks' faces. [*Laughter*] And——

Audience member. Thank you!

The President. No, you're welcome. I mean, it's—[*laughter*]. Although, I was telling somebody the other day, at some point they're going to go back up, so don't start—[*laughter*]—going out there and ignoring the mileage on—when you're buying a new car. You've got to keep looking for those savings.

And in the single most hopeful sign for middle class families, wages are starting to go up again.

And so America is poised for another good year. Indianapolis is poised for another good year, as long as Washington works to keep this progress going. And I was struck as I was listening to the mayor's introduction, here in Indiana, we've been able to do some good things because we haven't been so worried about Democrat-Republican, and we focused more on trying to get the job done. And that attitude we're hoping to kind of infect Washington with, try to adapt that same attitude when it comes to the problems that we face going forward. And Dick Lugar was a great example of that.

We have written—we have risen from recession freer to write our own future than any nation on Earth. But we've got to make some decisions about what that future looks like. Are we going to be a nation where a few of us do spectacularly well and everybody else is struggling to get by? Or are we going to have a country in which everybody has opportunity, everybody has got a chance to succeed?

Last year, I got a letter from Jylian Milham, who lives up in Fishers. Where's Jylian? There she is right there, right in front. And Jylian has got four kids, ages 6 through 16—which means that she's busy. [*Laughter*] For 13 years, Jylian was a stay-home mom. A few years ago, she was going through a divorce, had to find a way to support her family. She didn't have a college degree. Most of the jobs that she could find paid minimum wage. As she put it, "I was a mom with four kids, and I had everything coming against me."

So Jylian came here to Ivy Tech to invest in herself, to learn new skills. She paid her way with the help of a grant from her country and a grant from the State of Indiana. She made the dean's list, earned a spot in the radiography program at IUPUI—[*laughter*]—and that's a profession that pays pretty well. And today, she's a few months from graduating. She's ready to get started on a new career. [*Applause*] And—really proud.

And in the letter she wrote, she said, it's not just the possibility of financial security and career advancement. She said, it's also "something I can show my children." It's about pride, and it's about being able to point to a brighter future for the next generation.

And that's who I get up for every single day. Sometimes, people ask me, Mr. President, your hair is so gray. [*Laughter*] Folks are always talking about you, not always in the most flattering way. How do you do it? Well, the reason is folks like Jylian, who are out there all across Indiana, all across the country; they're working so hard, doing the right thing, not asking for a handout. They just want to make sure that if they are putting in the effort and they're meeting their responsibilities that they can get ahead.

And we can't do it for them, but we can help. We can create structures of opportunity like we have here at Ivy Tech. That's some-

thing we can do for everybody. And that's what keeps me going. And I want to make sure that this is a country where hard work is rewarded and you get a chance to make a decent living.

And that's what I've been calling middle class economics is all about: the idea that in this country, everybody does best when everybody is doing their fair share and everybody has got a fair shot and everybody is playing by the same set of rules.

We live in a time of constant change. And technology has made some jobs obsolete; global competition has shipped some jobs overseas. It's tougher to afford economic necessities like childcare or health care. And that's been true since long before the financial crisis hit back in 2007, 2008. And that's why, at a time when the economy is finally picking up steam and growing again, we've got to work twice as hard, especially in Washington, to help more Americans like Jylian.

So this week, I sent Congress a budget that's built on this idea of middle class economics for the 21st century. It means helping middle class families afford childcare and health care, make it a little easier to pay for college without taking on loads of debt, paid leave at work, helping first-time home buyers, helping people save for retirement. And my budget addresses each of these issues, and it could put thousands of dollars back in the pockets of hard-working middle class families.

Middle class economics also means helping more people like Jylian upgrade their skills. Because this competitive economy is not going to get easier. Folks just aren't going to be in the same job for 30 years. These young people who are here today, they're going to have a bunch of different jobs, and they're going to be—there's going to be the need for you to continually upgrade your skills. It's all about lifelong learning now, not just a one-time deal.

So that's why my budget makes 2 years of community college free for every responsible student. [*Applause*] Every responsible student. Because here in America, it shouldn't matter how much money your folks make; if you're willing to work hard, you should be able to get that opportunity. And you shouldn't necessarily have a hundred thousand dollars' worth of debt when you leave, especially if you're going to go into a profession like teaching or—[*applause*].

And we're not just working to make community colleges free, like Ivy Tech; we want to make our community colleges even better and more responsive and more attuned to what's going in the marketplace. Right here, at this school—one of the best in the country, not just in the State of Indiana—you're finding ways to raise graduation rates and partner with businesses to help provide apprenticeships and other pathways to careers that pay well in fields like construction and technology.

Middle class economics also means that we're investing in what makes our economy grow: better roads, faster Internet, cutting-edge research so that our businesses are creating high-paying jobs. And the good news is, we can actually afford to pay for all this. We don't have to add to our deficits if we've got some smart spending cuts and if we fix a Tax Code that is filled up with special interest loopholes and kickbacks for folks who don't need them.

And in my budget, I identify some of these. There's a trust fund loophole that allows the wealthiest 1 percent of Americans, who have benefited more over the last 20 years than anybody from—when the economy has been growing, but this trust fund loophole allows the top 1 percent of Americans to avoid paying taxes on their unearned income. That's not something that Jylian, when she gets her job, is going to be able to do. The majority of people here can't avoid paying taxes. I don't know why the folks who are most able to pay them should be able to avoid it. So we need to fix that. And then, we can use the savings to cut taxes for middle class families who really need it.

We know that there are companies that have stashed about $2 trillion overseas that haven't paid U.S. taxes. Let's close those loopholes and make it more attractive for businesses to locate here in the United States of America. Let's give those folks a tax break. They'll create jobs right here in Indianapolis, right here in Indiana, as opposed to giving tax breaks to folks that are shipping jobs overseas or parking money overseas. We can do that.

So these are ideas that are pretty common sense. Now, in Washington, folks saw the budget, and they said, well, these are Obama's plans; some of them are pretty good ideas, but they're never going to go anyplace because the Republicans control Congress and they're not going to do it. Well, I'm not pushing these ideas for my sake; I'm pushing them because I think this is where America needs to go. And we should have a healthy debate about how to do the things that are necessary to help America grow.

Now, Republicans and Democrats won't agree on everything, and that's fine. But we should agree on the stuff we're talking about now. We should agree that hard-working families should be able to get childcare that's not more expensive than sending a kid to college. We should agree that somebody like Jylian, who wants to better herself, should be able to go to college without being loaded up with even more debt.

We should be willing to agree that a great city like Indianapolis needs to keep its infrastructure in good shape in order to attract new businesses so they feel confident that they can get their products and services out to market and that we've got the best trained workforce in the world because that's what's going to make companies want to locate here. Those are things we can agree on. We should agree that the Tax Code should be fair, and nobody should be treated better just because they've got better accountants or better lawyers.

So if Republicans disagree with the way I'm trying to solve these problems, they should put forward their own plans, and I am happy to look at it. But what we can't do is ignore the problems and pretend that they don't matter, pretend that families aren't out there struggling, doing their best.

And I believe in a crazy thing Dick Lugar once wrote. Dick said, "The other party is also patriotic and may have [some] good ideas." [*Laughter*] That's shocking. So I know Mayor Ballard believes the same thing, and certainly, I do. So let's roll up our sleeves, work together, and try to get some stuff done. That's what all of you elected us to do, not to turn everything into a Washington food fight—[*laughter*]—not to just refight the old partisan battles. Let's have a debate that's worthy of this country and build on an economy that is picking up steam and make sure that it is serving everybody, that prosperity is broad based, that not only everybody is sharing America's success, but everybody is contributing to America's success. That's what we're trying to do.

So that's what's on my mind. Now, I want to hear what's on your mind. All right? So we're going to start taking some questions. And the way this is going to work is really simple. You raise your hand. [*Laughter*] I will call on you. And if you could stand up, introduce yourself, try to keep your question relatively short. I'll try to keep my answer relatively short. In fact, the only rule I'm going to impose is, I'm going to go girl, boy, girl, boy, to make sure it's even. [*Laughter*] Make sure it's fair. All right? Okay, let's get started. Who wants to go first? This young lady right here.

College Affordability/Community Colleges/State Higher Education Funding

Q. Hi, I'm Erica Walsh with the College Democrats of Indiana. I was curious how you think offering 2-year free community college will impact universities with traditional 4-years college?

The President. Well, I think a lot of folks are going to still use the traditional pathway of going to a 4-year university. And if you—if that's your best option, God bless you, that's great. There's always going to be a market for Indiana University or Notre Dame. It's not like suddenly people are going to stop wanting to go there.

But what the 2 years of free community college potentially does is, for somebody who is cash strapped, their best option may be, let me go get 2 years in a community college; I may have already at that point gotten the training I need to go out into the workforce and get a good-paying job. Or if I decide that I want to continue with my education, I can now transfer to a 4-year institution with those credits, which means that the amount of tuition I'm paying at

the 4-year university is going to be reduced. Either way, you are saving money.

And this is part of what we need to do to be more creative about, how do young people get the skills they need without spending as much money or taking on as much debt? This isn't the only kind of thing we're looking at. For example—and I think Ivy Tech is looking at this kind of partnership with high schools—a number of community colleges now are linking up with high schools where you can start taking college credits in high school so that by the time you get to the community college, you've already got some credits, which reduces the amount of time that you have to spend in the community college. And that will save you money too.

So the point is, is that we have this very rigid system. We have this image in our heads: Okay, you go through high school, and then right away, you go to a 4-year university. And instead, what we should be thinking about is how do we create from the time you are in ninth grade all the way until the time that you've got a job, how do we make sure you're able to get the best skills possible at the cheapest cost.

And if there are faster pathways to do that, let's use those faster pathways. If there are cheaper ways to do that, let's find ways to reduce cost. Let's use technology in some cases. I mean, online learning is getter better and better and better. And are there ways in which, particularly, say, somebody who is a mom and has an irregular schedule and can't be on a campus all day, are there ways that she can get some credits while still looking after a family or working part time? So we just have to be much more creative about these issues.

The one thing that in addition to being creative we have to remember is that State legislators have a responsibility to make sure that State institutions are still getting the support that they need. Because part of what's happened—[*applause*]—part of the reason that the cost of higher education has gone up so rapidly is that State support for those institutions has gone down or not kept up with inflation. So what happens is then school administrators have to make up for it with higher tuition.

Now, the school administrators, they have a responsibility to be more efficient. And students and parents, we have a responsibility to be smart consumers. I joked with Malia and Sasha—because Malia is now at the age where she's starting to look at colleges—and I said, these days, I hear everybody is looking for fancy gyms and gourmet food and—[*laughter*]—really spiffy dorms.

Let me tell you, when I was at college, we—the college I started at, Occidental College, it did have a gym, but, like, the weight room was—it was, like, a medicine ball, and you had to, like—[*laughter*]—I mean, it wasn't fancy. It wasn't State of the art. Cafeteria, I don't remember some of the stuff they served there, but I remember it wasn't that appetizing. [*Laughter*] I do know there was something on the menu that we called roast beast, because we couldn't really tell what kind of meat it was. [*Laughter*] It was some sort of meat product.

So students and parents have to be better consumers. The universities have to figure out how to become more efficient and also give information to young people ahead of time. Because part of what happens these days is, in recruiting students, they'll say, don't worry about it, you'll be able to afford it. Well, it's true that, in part, we've expanded Pell grants, and we cut out the bank middleman on student loans so that we could give more student loans, that a lot of young people are able to finance college that they couldn't do before. But if they don't know ahead of time that when you get out you may have a $60,000, $70,000, $80,000 bill, then that's a problem. So we've got to provide them better information.

But ultimately, what also has to happen is, State legislators have to step up. The Federal Government will do its part. And we've expanded the support we're giving to students. But these public institutions have a special obligation. And it is a good investment, because the States with the best educational system, that's where companies are going to go. It's true not just in this country, it's true all across the world. All right?

Okay, it's a gentleman's turn. This young man right here, white shirt. I'm not sure we've got a mike back here. How loud are you? Are you able to just shout? No. [*Laughter*] All right. It's kind of a soft-spoken guy. Here we go.

Community Colleges/Job Training Programs

Q. Hi. I'm Mario Keisman, an ASAP student here at Ivy Tech. My question is, if community college does become free, do you feel as if the value of having an associate's degree will begin to drop?

The President. Absolutely not. But I think it's a good question. I've been asked this question before. I don't know where this is coming from.

I'll tell you a story—or I'll give you an example. There is a college in New York called City Colleges of New York. And back in the forties, fifties, sixties, the City Colleges of New York produced as many Nobel laureates as a lot of Ivy League schools. It was free, but it was considered one of the best universities in the country, one of the best college systems in the country. Nobody thought, well, because you went to the city colleges and it didn't cost you any money, that somehow the education was devalued.

So the issue is not whether you're—how much money you're paying. The issue is what kind of education is it providing you. And the reputation of the school is going to be determined by, when the graduates come out, do they have the skills they need to do the job? And if they do, then employers are going to know it, because employers are hungry for well-qualified students. I can't tell you how many businesses I talk to where they say, our biggest problem is, we can't find enough workers who are trained in the fields that we're searching for. So don't let anybody think that paying more means a better education.

One thing that we do have to think about—and this is where community colleges can be an outstanding bridge—is making sure that we're reaching out to businesses and finding out what do they need for the positions that they're hiring and having those businesses help community colleges design training programs and departments to serve those needs.

And we're seeing a lot more work done by community colleges on that front. And Ivy Tech does a great job also with apprenticeships in partnership with labor councils. That's another example of smart education. It turns out, the average apprentice gets a $50,000 starting salary once they get out of apprenticeship, on average across the country. So we're doing a lot to encourage schools to expand apprenticeships and partnerships.

But yes, don't think paying more is better. Paying less is better. I'm always looking for a deal. [*Laughter*]

All right, let's see; yes, right there. Yes, hold—mike is coming right there.

Q. Yes, my name is Amy Saxton.

The President. Hold on, Amy. There you go.

529 College Savings Plans

Q. Oh, sure. Thank you. My name is Amy Saxton, and my question is, I paid for my daughter's college. I'm now saving for my grandchildren's college with a 529 plan.

The President. Right.

Q. Do you see any changes that might impact me as I go into retirement?

The President. We initially looked at changing the 529 plan. And the reason is that—I have 529s for both Malia and Sasha. For those who aren't familiar, 529 is basically a savings account that you can put in tax free up to a certain amount for savings for your child's college. The problem is, when you looked at the statistics, the folks who used the most were folks who were a little more on the high end. A lot of people couldn't use them because they just weren't generating enough savings to be able to take advantage of the benefit. And so our thinking was, you could save money by eliminating the 529 and shifting it into some other loan programs that would be more broadly based.

But I think enough people—and we were going to hold harmless folks like you or me who already have money in 529s, so it wasn't as if suddenly you had to start paying taxes on it.

But just going forward we were going to change it.

I'll be honest with you. There were enough people who already were utilizing 529s that they started feeling as if, well, changing like this in midstream, even if I'm not affected right now, I like the program. It wasn't worth it for us to eliminate it, the savings weren't that great. So we actually, based on response, changed our mind and are going to be paying for the 2 years of free community college with other sources, including some of the tax loopholes that we're closing. So, short answer to your question is, 529s will not change at this point. Okay?

Got a gentleman here who really has a question, right here. He was waving and everything. This is going to be a good one.

Q. It's going to be a good one.

The President. I know that's right.

Basketball/"My Brother's Keeper" Initiative/National Basketball Association

Q. My names Eddie White with the Indiana Pacers.

The President. Oh, good to talk to you, man. [*Laughter*]

Q. Basketball is really important in this State. You know, we have this saying, "In 49 States, it's just basketball, but this is Indiana." [*Laughter*] Years ago, on a radio show, you told me that—when I asked you about your game, you said you were "a poor man's Tayshaun Prince." Where is your game today? And one more thing: Tamika Catchings says she's ready, one-on-one any time you want.

The President. All right. Well, let me make a couple of points here. [*Laughter*] First of all, I love Tamika. She refereed the game we played in Kokomo, so she was a witness to my domination on the court. [*Laughter*] But when it comes to me playing her one-on-one, at this point I'm not sure. Because I'll be honest with you, my game is a little broke. [*Laughter*] I've been a little busy. And what happens is that sort of the risk-reward ratio starts shifting. Like, the chances of an Achilles tear or an ACL injury are—is increasing each month. And then, the satisfaction I get from playing diminishes because I'm so bad. [*Laughter*] And so I think golf. [*Laughter*] Likelihood of injury much lower. But I still love the game. I still love the game.

And this is a good time for me to give a shout-out to the NBA. Mayor Ballard mentioned the work that he's doing with "My Brother's Keepers." And this is something that we initiated in response to all the negative news that we were hearing about young African American men and Latino men and their interactions with police. And we said, all right, there are a whole bunch of issues that we have to deal with on the criminal justice side, but we have to have an affirmative agenda to make sure that young people feel hope and opportunity and pathways.

And so the idea of "My Brother's Keepers" is that we are working with both the private sector and the public sector, all across the country, on mentorship programs. The mayor is talking to folks about doing a zero-to-three program, because we know that if you invest early in young people, they are much more likely to succeed in school. We know that there are certain points in time where kids are more likely to drop out or more likely to get in trouble with the criminal justice system, and so figuring out interventions. We know that if they're reading at grade level in the third grade, then they're much more likely to graduate, so making sure that we're really concentrating on reading skills at that level.

And the interest and involvement has surprised even me. People have been really generous and stepped up to the plate. And the NBA is participating. And some of you who have been watching the games may have seen some of the ads of some of the players talking directly to the TV screen and saying to young people, they matter. And so I just want to commend them for the great work they're doing on that front. Commissioner Silver has been very good on it. So we appreciate it.

All righty, let's see. Young lady way in the back. Right there. Yes, you. Hold on one second though. Wait for the mike to come.

Q. I want to get this right, so I'm going to read it off.

The President. Okay.

Q. Hi. My name is Isabelle Keller.

The President. But you don't have to talk that fast. [*Laughter*]

Q. Okay, I'll go slowly. I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

The President. You're just kind of nervous.

Q. Yes.

The President. Okay.

Q. A little bit.

The President. Yes.

Political Participation

Q. My name is Isabelle Keller, and I'm the junior class president at my high school. And I'm cochairing a bipartisan event at my school next year to help engage high school students in our political process. What advice do you have in helping attract high school students and get them more engaged, like, in our country's politics?

The President. That's great. See, I love young leaders like this. They're juniors in high school taking an interest. Make sure one of our volunteers gets—what's your name again? Isabelle? Okay, let's get Isabelle's e-mail, and maybe I'll send her a note for the—to kick off the event next year. The—[*applause*].

One of the big challenges that we have in this country is the lack of civic engagement, the lack of participation. In the last election, only about a third of people who were eligible to vote voted—a third. And you have elections that take place, for example, in Ukraine, where they're in the middle of a war, and their participation rates are at 60 percent. And here, with all the blessings that we've got, the notion that only a third of us would vote that are eligible doesn't make any sense. And so it starts at a young age.

And I think the most important thing in any bipartisan event like that is to help young people understand that politics is not some sideshow in Washington, it's not some cable chatter yacking, arguing. It's how we, together, as a community, make decisions about our priorities. What do we think is important?

When you're a junior in high school, if you're like Malia, if you decide you and your friends are going out, you've got to make all kinds of decisions about where we're going to eat and what movie do you want to see, and you guys take votes, and you're trying to figure out maybe one of your friends doesn't have enough money, and are we going to chip in to help make sure she can go too.

Well, the same thing is true for a country. We've got to make priorities. We've got to make decisions. Are we going to invest in schools? Are we going to make sure that when you graduate you can afford to go to college? Are we going to make sure that we're investing in the research that creates new medicines that will help cure cancer or Parkinson's disease? Are we going to make sure that we're treating our veterans the way they need to be treated when they come home? How are we going to pay for that? Who's going to pay for that? Are we going to make sure that we're passing on an environment with clean air and clean water, and how are we going to do that? And how are we going to balance that with making sure that we're growing an economy so when you graduate from college there's a job for you?

Well, those are all the things that politics determines. So I think, more than anything, helping young people understand that this stuff matters to them and that government is not something separate from you, it is you. In a democracy, it's you that makes these decisions.

And then, making sure you've got good pizza at the event is also important. [*Laughter*]

All right. Who's next? Young man right here. Right here. [*Laughter*] Thank you. Thank you.

The President's Community College Tuition Assistance Proposal

Q. Hi, I am Mark. Oh, first, I want to say thank you for all the things you're doing and the things that you're going to do for our Nation.

The President. Oh, indeed. Yes.

Q. Secondly, my name is Mark Kelly. I am actually currently the president of the ASAP organization. And my question is, what is the

criteria and the requirements for this plan that you're trying to propose?

The President. For which plan?

Q. For 2 years free of college? Yes.

The President. The idea would be that you would have to maintain at least a 2.5 average. So we're not going to—I mean, there's no such thing as a completely free lunch. We want to reward people who are making the effort. Because one of the problems we have when it comes to college educations is that young people aren't graduating fast enough, they're dragging things out too long, and that just adds costs. And even if they are taking out loans, so it's—technically, they're paying for it, the problem is, is that the more expensive it gets, the less likely it may be that they can pay it back.

So what we're saying is you've got to earn it. You've got to have a 2.5 average. You've got to maintain attendance. You've got to stay on a schedule and have a game plan at the front end so that you graduate on time.

And obviously, there would be special circumstances like illness or what have you, but the point is, this is not you get 2 years of free goofing off. This is to help you achieve your goals. But that means that you have to put in the effort. All right? So that would be the main criteria.

All right. Yes, right here. Hold on a second, mike is coming.

Veterans' Health Care/Employment Opportunities for Veterans

Q. My name is Christylee Vickers. I'm an OIF veteran from the U.S. Army, and I'm also the president of the Ivy Tech Collegiate Veterans Organization. I'm—[*applause*].

The President. Yay! What branch were you in?

Q. I was in the Army, and I was a mechanic.

The President. Army strong!

Q. Hooah!

The President. All right.

Q. Now, my question is, veterans get to use the GI bill. They also get VOC rehab if they are underemployed or if they use their GI bill or if their GI bill—if they were a cold war veteran, they never got that. How does this affect a veteran's use of education? Because veterans today are dealing with unemployment rates higher than other people. They're dealing with unemployment altogether. And what's really important is getting a veteran who is dealing with posttraumatic stress or other problems to get an education and have people who understand the fact that they have issues, but at the same time, they have benefits that they've earned and they've paid for through blood and tears?

The President. Right. Well, first of all, thank you for your service. We're proud of you. For those who qualify under the post-9/11 GI bill, you're already supposed to be getting the benefits that you have earned. And so nothing would change about that program.

As you point out, it's not just college tuition, though, that is often a burden on our veterans. So I am very proud of the fact that I have increased veterans funding more than any administration since I've been in office. And a lot of it is focused on some of the challenges that you talk about.

For example, we made it much easier for veterans with posttraumatic stress disorder to qualify under disability claims. We expanded significantly the number of mental health facilities that were available. We set up, for example, special programs for women veterans, because they've got different medical needs, through the VA system.

Another example that's really important is we've been working with States and local governments around issues of licensing. So you said you were a mechanic. There may be, in a lot of States, licensing requirements for you to be a mechanic or to be an EMS officer or to be a nurse. And what we were finding was, is that—I still remember I had a conversation with a guy up in Minnesota. This is when I first came into office. We're at a little diner, sitting down. He had just come back from Iraq. He had two or three tours in Iraq. And you can imagine what an emergency medic in Iraq is dealing with in 2006 or 2007. He decided he wanted to make a career as a nurse. He was having to come back, and he was having to start with Nursing 101. I mean, he had to start from

scratch, as if he didn't have this incredible wealth of experience and skill.

And so we set out to work with State legislators and cities and others that oftentimes are responsible for licensing to say there's got to be transferability and credit for the incredible work that veterans do on the job so that they don't have to start all over again and take a whole bunch of new classes just to get certified on stuff they already know how to do. And that's been really helpful as well.

The key now is to get more employers to recognize the skills of our veterans. So Michelle and Jill Biden, through their Joining Forces program, have been able to recruit companies all across the country—major corporations like Honeywell, smaller companies—to not just do job fairs, but make concrete commitments we are going to hire a certain number of veterans, a certain number of military spouses. And hundreds of thousands of folks have come through these programs.

The challenge that we've still got is that we've got to find ways for veterans to upgrade their skills through this process. And that's where things like apprenticeships and—so that folks aren't just getting hired at the bottom rungs, but have the opportunity to maybe come in at a higher wage and a higher salary. So we've got tie together the education process with the hiring process. All right?

Q. Can I add to that?

The President. Sure.

Q. In Indiana, there's a bill currently in the house and in the senate that is trying to give the private sector military hiring preference, like the government does. Within the government, you have a point system being a veteran, for serving, for having a disability rating, for being a spouse, and so on. And in Indiana, they're trying to pass this bill to give a hiring preference, saying if you and a veteran have the same qualifications, veterans should get the job. I feel like that is somewhat fair because they put their life on hold for 2 to 20 years to serve our country, and they're taking this job experience that you've acknowledged, and they're taking that real-world, and they're—the fact that they always show up to work on time, they'll pass a drug test. And they're willing to put in that extra mile. Do you agree with that bill that's trying to get passed?

The President. I am always careful about not look—agreeing with bills that I have not read, because that's how I get into trouble. [*Laughter*] But if there are any State legislators here, this young lady is going to be very interested in talking to you. And the——

Q. Mr. President, we just passed that bill out of the senate committee this past week.

The President. Well, there you go. See, so—that's your representatives and senators hard at work. [*Laughter*]

But I think the basic concept of making sure that we are crediting the work that is done by veterans is really important. I mean, the sacrifices that not just veterans, but their families, make are incredible.

And I'm proud to say that we do much better now than we did in the past. I mean, when you read about the Vietnam era, it's just heartbreaking how veterans were treated when they came home. I think we, as a society—and this has been bipartisan—have really improved, but we still have a lot more work to do. So the veterans' health system, for example, is far better now than it was 30 years ago or 20 years ago—demonstrably better.

But as we saw—remember in Phoenix—there are still situations where the wait times are too long. Veterans are really satisfied once they get in the system, but getting the initial appointment is often too tough. There's too much bureaucracy. There's too much redtape. So we have to just constantly keep at this and constantly keep improving it.

And as we end—we've now ended both the Iraq war and the Afghan war. We've got millions of people—[*applause*]—in terms of the combat role, we've got hundreds of thousands of folks who are coming home, and they're going to need help making this transition. And obviously, we still have folks in harm's way now dealing with ISIL, as well as helping to train both Iraqi and Afghan armies. And they're going to need help as well. They're still on rotations. Their families are still missing them, and

they're missing birthdays and soccer games. And it's a big sacrifice.

So thanks for the question, and thanks for your service.

All right, we've got a gentleman? Let's see. This is a good bunch to choose from. He's got a veteran's—he's got a veteran's hat on, which makes me more biased towards him. [*Laughter*] This is an example of your—but are you going to ask another veteran's question?

Q. No.

The President. Okay, right here.

Textbook Costs/President's Community College Tuition Assistance Proposal/Role of College Advisers

Q. Mr. President, thank you for coming, and thanks for taking my question. I am Chris Bowen. I'm the student government president here, and I—so I represent the students here in the central region of Indiana for Ivy Tech.

The President. That's great.

Q. And something we could use right away is a tax credit for books. They're just—the costs on the books are just running away. We need somebody to do—some help in that area, and then the same thing with advisers. We really need some advisers that know the classes that we need, to look at the skills that we already have in our life and say, hey, have you thought about looking at an approach in a different way. And so we really need some help from the Federal Government in those areas.

The President. I think that's a great point. First of all, I should have mentioned at the outset, when Michelle and I got out of—when we got married, in addition to our—the bonds of love, we had the bonds of debt. [*Laughter*] We—our net worth was negative because we had all these student loans. And basically, for the first 10 years of our marriage, we paid more in student loan repayment than we did on our mortgage.

And since we both went to law school, we both remember well the cost of books. And for those—and then I taught in the law school, so I remember having to assign books. I actually cheated a little bit and put together these syllabi that—where I'd Xerox stuff off, and they could get a packet, and it was a lot cheaper for folks. But that's not always possible. [*Laughter*]

But I will say, nothing is worse than when a professor assigns their own book. [*Laughter*] Because then you know they're getting over. [*Laughter*] But the book costs are enormous. They're real.

Now, one of the advantages of the 2 year of free college tuition plan: That doesn't include room and board and books, but what that does then is it frees up your ability to use Pell grants or other programs for books, right? So it would relieve some of those costs and living expenses and transportation and all that stuff. So school still wouldn't be perfectly free, but you would now have the budget to manage that.

With respect to advisers, I think this is a great point. We're actually starting at the high school level. Michelle just had an event to celebrate counselors. And she had Connie Britton—remember, she played a counselor in "Friday Night Lights"? You all watch that show? That was a good show. [*Laughter*] So she came to speak, but it was celebrating the role of counselors in high schools.

But the same is true in community colleges with advisers. A lot of young people have a general idea of what they want to do, but don't always know the path to get there, don't know what the requirements are, don't know what classes they should be taking. And one of the big problems that drives up college costs is, young people start down one path, they get about halfway through it, they realize, actually, that's the thing I'm more interested in over there. They switch, but all those credits that they took now are wasted. And they've got to start all over again. And that extends greatly the amount of time that it takes to graduate. So having more counselors and investors on the front end, end up being a good investment for the system overall.

Now, I haven't talked to your president here about how schools are currently budgeting advisers, but certainly, this is something that we are interested in. And we're going to want to partner with community colleges and public universities, as well as with high schools to see what more work we can do on that front. So

good suggestions. That's why you got elected president. Absolutely.

All right. It's a young lady's turn. Right here. Right in the middle. You, yes.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities

Q. Good afternoon, Mr. President. My name is Dana Phillips with Nathaniel Lee and LeAnne Fairman. And my question is, with the focus being on 2-year community colleges right now, what focus does your administration have for Historically Black Colleges and Universities for students outside of Indiana, where they may choose to attend these institutions with such dire straits that many of them are facing right now?

The President. Well, we have some outstanding Historically Black Colleges and Universities. We've got some universities that historically serve primarily Latino students, who do a great job as well. Many of those schools, because of their critical role in serving underrepresented communities, under Federal legislation get additional dollars to help with infrastructure and maintain their faculties and so forth.

But many of the problems that those schools face are also the ones that every other school faces, which is rising tuition, students taking out too much debt, graduation rates that are too low. And so we're working with them on this common set of problems.

Now, I will say this: There are some Historically Black Colleges and Universities that are not doing a good job with graduation rates. And so one of the things that we're doing is, we're saying to schools of all stripes that we're going to develop some measures so that parents and students can know ahead of time how those schools are performing, so that we can increase consumer education. Because what I don't want to do is to have the Federal Government pay for a Pell grant or student loans, and you go to a school where they're taking that money, you're getting into debt, but your graduation rate is low, which means you may end up leaving without a degree. You now are on the hook for this debt; if you can't pay it, then taxpayers have to pay for it. That's a problem.

So what we're doing is, those schools that are doing outstanding jobs serving underrepresented communities, we're going to give them some extra help. Schools that are not doing a good job, we're saying to them we're going to give you the training to get better, but at a certain point, if you don't get better, we're going to start advertising the fact that your graduation rates are too low. I mean, we've got to have some accountability in this overall process. All right? Good.

Gentleman right here in—there you go—in that spiffy gray jacket.

National Economy/Infrastructure/Childcare/Paid Sick Leave

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. My name is Frank Short. I have a question. You've been our leader for 6 years, you have 2 years left. What would be your number-one priority, and what could we, as hard-working Hoosiers, help you to do to accomplish that?

The President. I appreciate that. My number-one priority is to make sure that the American people's wages and incomes are going up, since right now the stock market has gone up, corporate profits are at an alltime high, corporate balance sheets have never been better in history. That's not according to me, that's according to Bloomberg and Fortune magazine, not publications that generally are my big promoters. [*Laughter*] So they're doing well. And the question now is, how do the folks who work in those companies, how do we get them more income and more wages?

Now, that can't happen if the economy doesn't grow. So first and foremost, we've got to keep this growth going. And one of the worries that we're going to have this year—the economy is doing well. The problem is, overseas, the economies aren't doing so well. Europe is not doing well. China is slowing down because they're transitioning, and so that's having some impact on our exports.

So if we want to keep the progress that we're—that's going on right now, the best thing we can do is to make the investments that I talked about in the State of the Union to

create more growth and more demand here in the United States.

I'll be very specific. This is something that you can help on: Infrastructure. We know that we've got about $2 trillion worth of deferred maintenance we need to do in this country: bridges that are unsafe, sewer mains that are bursting, airports that are out of date. We've got an air traffic control system that doesn't take advantage of new technologies. If we put in place a new state-of-the-art air traffic control system, it's estimated that airlines could save 30 percent on their fuel costs because they wouldn't be hovering around trying to wait to land. That means 30-percent less pollution from fuel. It means we could cut delays by about 30 percent, which I know everybody here who has flown lately would really appreciate. It would be good for business.

So—and the good thing about infrastructure is, you can't export those jobs. They have to be done here by American workers. And so then those American workers have more money in their pocket, and then they go the restaurant nearby, and then suddenly, the restaurant is doing a little bit better, and so they hire a couple more shifts, and you get this virtuous cycle.

So—and traditionally, that's been a bipartisan issue. So if we can get Republican Representatives and Senators and Democratic Representatives and Senators here in Indiana, if you guys can push them to say, let's go ahead and move forward on an infrastructure program—I know the mayor wouldn't mind doing it, right?—and convince them, that keeps the economy growing overall.

But then there are also some things that I want to do more directly for middle class families, and that has to do with this tax system. As I mentioned before, there was a young woman I talked about at the State of the Union—wonderful family, the Erlers, two little boys, not yet—one of them school age, one of them is still too young and in preschool. Their childcare is more than tuition at the University of Minnesota or at least close.

We are the only advanced nation on Earth that does not provide support to families when their kids are really young and doesn't invest in making sure that our childcare system works the way it should. So I've put forward an initiative that says let's consolidate and make more helpful a tax credit for childcare. Let's boost the quality of childcare so that parents have confidence when they're putting their kids someplace that teachers there are trained and they're getting good early childhood education. Let's get more slots. That's something that just is concretely helping families right now.

And by the way, it's not just the poor family that has trouble here. There are a lot of folks who we'd all consider middle class who have the same problem. I mean, it's just hard, especially now that the typical middle class family, they've got two breadwinners. Folks both have to work in order to succeed.

And we know how to do this. My grandfather, when he went away to war, fighting in Patton's army in Europe, my grandmother stayed home; she was Rosie the Riveter. She was working on an assembly line for bombers, and this country provided childcare because they knew it was a necessity. If you were going to have women working in the workforce, somebody had to look after those kids. So it's not as if we don't have any experience doing this. We just don't do a good job.

Paid sick leave, it's another good example. We've got 43 million Americans who don't have paid sick leave. You think about that. Again, we're, like, the only country in the industrialized world that does not provide paid sick leave. Well, that's money out of people's pockets. People will get sick. And the idea that in a society like ours we would force people to choose between leaving a sick child at home, for example, or giving up a day's pay, that doesn't make any sense.

That's—so the way Hoosiers can help, the way folks all across America can help, is to let your Members of Congress know these things are important.

And if, as I said before, Republicans in Congress, Mitch McConnell and John Boehner and the leadership there, if they disagree with how I'm paying for a bigger childcare tax credit, if they disagree with how I plan to pay for infrastructure, if they don't want to raise—or

close loopholes on the top 1 percent or go after some of these loopholes that send profits overseas—if they don't want to do it that way, then they should show me another way.

But your voice letting them know this is important—not because it's partisan, but because it's the right thing to do for America—if they hear that from enough people, then that's going to make a difference.

But it goes back to what that young lady asked me about—Isabelle, right? See, I've got a good memory. I'm not getting too old. [*Laughter*] The—it goes back to what Isabelle was saying: Our system only works when people are involved. When people are involved and informed and taking the time to ask questions and let their opinions be known, then ultimately, the Government will respond. But if only a third of the people are saying anything, the Government doesn't respond, and you get the Government that we've seen in Washington lately, which is unresponsive, and it's not doing enough.

So people have to get involved, and you've got to be informed. And if we are, then I am so optimistic about this country. I have to—the reason we've gotten out of this recession over the last 6 years is in part—I'm going to go ahead and brag a little bit—we made some good decisions. We made the decision to save the auto industry. We made the decision to stabilize the financial system. We made the decision to help local governments keep their teachers on the payroll and not lay them off. We made a bunch of decisions to do infrastructure spending. And all that helped lift us out of the recession we were in.

But the main reason was because people worked hard in the private sector and small businesses, and they tightened their belts, and they made sacrifices, and they paid down debt, and they dug themselves out of holes. The resilience and the grit and the basic decency of the American people and our willingness to work hard and our innovation, our willingness to take risks—it puts us in such a good position.

I travel all around the world. I know the economies of every country in the world. I know their problems, I know their advantages. People talk about China, and they talk about Germany, and they talk about India. Nobody has got better cards than we do if we make good decisions together. And somebody once said about America, we always end up doing the right thing after we've tried everything else. [*Laughter*] And I'm hoping that we don't have to try every other thing before we do the right thing right now to help middle class families get ahead.

If we do that, the economy is going to be stronger, businesses are going to do better, consumers are going to be more confident, we'll sell more goods overseas, our kids will have the kind of future we want for them. That's what I'm going to be working on for the next 2 years. I hope you help. All right?

Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:33 p.m. in the auditorium of the Corporate College and Culinary Center. In his remarks, he referred to Paul George, strong forward, National Basketball Association's Indiana Pacers; Tamika Catchings, forward, Women's National Basketball Association's Indiana Fever; and St. Anthony, MN, resident Rebekah Erler, her husband Ben Erler, and their sons Jack and Henry. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization. A participant referred to Tayshaun Prince, strong forward, NBA's Boston Celtics.

Statement on the Death of Representative P. Alan Nunnelee
February 6, 2015

Michelle and I were saddened to learn of the passing of Representative Alan Nunnelee. Alan represented the people of his beloved Mississippi for two decades, first as a State senator and then in Congress. A proud son of Tupelo, Alan never wavered in his determination to serve the men and women who placed their trust in him, even as he

bravely battled the illness that ultimately took his life. As a Sunday school teacher and a deacon at his church, Alan believed deeply in the power of faith and the strength of American families. Today our thoughts and prayers are with Alan's family: his wife Tori, their children and grandchildren, and all those who loved him.

Statement on the 2015 National Security Strategy
February 6, 2015

Today, the United States is stronger and better positioned to seize the opportunities of a still new century and safeguard our interests against the risks of an insecure world.

America's growing economic strength is the foundation of our national security and a critical source of our influence abroad. Since the Great Recession, we have created nearly 11 million new jobs during the longest private sector job growth in our history. Unemployment has fallen to its lowest level in 6 years. We are now the world leader in oil and gas production. We continue to set the pace for science, technology, and innovation in the global economy.

We also benefit from a young and growing workforce, and a resilient and diversified economy. The entrepreneurial spirit of our workers and businesses undergirds our economic edge. Our higher education system is the finest in the world, drawing more of the best students globally every year. We continue to attract immigrants from every corner of the world who renew our country with their energy and entrepreneurial talents.

Globally, we have moved beyond the large ground wars in Iraq and Afghanistan that defined so much of American foreign policy over the past decade. Compared to the nearly 180,000 troops we had in Iraq and Afghanistan when I took office, we now have fewer than 15,000 deployed in those countries. We possess a military whose might, technology, and geostrategic reach is unrivaled in human history. We have renewed our alliances from Europe to Asia.

Now, at this pivotal moment, we continue to face serious challenges to our national security, even as we are working to shape the opportunities of tomorrow. Violent extremism and an evolving terrorist threat raise a persistent risk of attacks on America and our allies. Escalating challenges to cybersecurity, aggression by Russia, the accelerating impacts of climate change, and the outbreak of infectious diseases all give rise to anxieties about global security. We must be clear-eyed about these and other challenges and recognize the United States has a unique capability to mobilize and lead the international community to meet them.

Any successful strategy to ensure the safety of the American people and advance our national security interests must begin with an undeniable truth—America must lead. Strong and sustained American leadership is essential to a rules-based international order that promotes global security and prosperity as well as the dignity and human rights of all peoples. The question is never whether America should lead, but how we lead.

Abroad, we are demonstrating that while we will act unilaterally against threats to our core interests, we are stronger when we mobilize collective action. That is why we are leading international coalitions to confront the acute challenges posed by aggression, terrorism, and disease. We are leading over 60 partners in a global campaign to degrade and ultimately defeat the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in Iraq and Syria, including by working to disrupt the flow of foreign fighters to those countries, while keeping pressure on al-Qa'ida. We are leading a global effort to stop the deadly spread of the Ebola virus at its source. In lockstep with our European allies, we are enforcing tough sanctions on Russia to impose costs and deter future aggression.

Even as we meet these pressing challenges, we are pursuing historic opportunities. Our rebalance to Asia and the Pacific is yielding deeper ties with a more diverse set of allies and partners. When complete, the Trans-Pacific Partnership will generate trade and investment

opportunities—and create high-quality jobs at home—across a region that represents more than 40 percent of global trade. We are primed to unlock the potential of our relationship with India. The scope of our cooperation with China is unprecedented, even as we remain alert to China's military modernization and reject any role for intimidation in resolving territorial disputes. We are deepening our investment in Africa, accelerating access to energy, health, and food security in a rapidly rising region. Our opening to Cuba will enhance our engagement in our own hemisphere, where there are enormous opportunities to consolidate gains in pursuit of peace, prosperity, democracy, and energy security.

Globally, we are committed to advancing the Prague Agenda, including by stopping the spread of nuclear weapons and securing nuclear materials. We are currently testing whether it is possible to achieve a comprehensive resolution to assure the international community that Iran's nuclear program is peaceful, while the Joint Plan of Action has halted the progress of Iran's program. We are building on our own energy security—and the ground-breaking commitment we made with China to reduce greenhouse gas emissions—to cement an international consensus on arresting climate change. We are shaping global standards for cybersecurity and building international capacity to disrupt and investigate cyber threats. We are playing a leading role in defining the international community's post-2015 agenda for eliminating extreme poverty and promoting sustainable development while prioritizing women and youth.

Underpinning it all, we are upholding our enduring commitment to the advancement of democracy and human rights and building new coalitions to combat corruption and to support open governments and open societies. In doing so, we are working to support democratic transitions, while also reaching out to the drivers of change in this century: young people and entrepreneurs.

Finally, I believe that America leads best when we draw upon our hopes rather than our fears. To succeed, we must draw upon the power of our example—that means viewing our commitment to our values and the rule of law as a strength, and not an inconvenience. That is why I have worked to ensure that America has the capabilities we need to respond to threats abroad, while acting in line with our values—prohibiting the use of torture; embracing constraints on our use of new technologies like drones; and upholding our commitment to privacy and civil liberties. These actions are a part of our resilience at home and a source of our influence abroad.

On all these fronts, America leads from a position of strength. But, this does not mean we can or should attempt to dictate the trajectory of all unfolding events around the world. As powerful as we are and will remain, our resources and influence are not infinite. And in a complex world, many of the security problems we face do not lend themselves to quick and easy fixes. The United States will always defend our interests and uphold our commitments to allies and partners. But, we have to make hard choices among many competing priorities, and we must always resist the overreach that comes when we make decisions based upon fear. Moreover, we must recognize that a smart national security strategy does not rely solely on military power. Indeed, in the long-term, our efforts to work with other countries to counter the ideology and root causes of violent extremism will be more important than our capacity to remove terrorists from the battlefield.

The challenges we face require strategic patience and persistence. They require us to take our responsibilities seriously and make the smart investments in the foundations of our national power. Therefore, I will continue to pursue a comprehensive agenda that draws on all elements of our national strength, that is attuned to the strategic risks and opportunities we face, and that is guided by the principles and priorities set out in this strategy. Moreover, I will continue to insist on budgets that safeguard our strength and work with the Congress to end sequestration, which undercuts our national security.

This is an ambitious agenda, and not everything will be completed during my Presidency. But I believe this is an achievable agenda, especially if we proceed with confidence and if we restore the bipartisan center that has been a pillar of strength for American foreign policy in decades past. As Americans, we will always have our differences, but what unites us is the national consensus that American global leadership remains indispensable. We embrace our exceptional role and responsibilities at a time when our unique contributions and capabilities are needed most, and when the choices we make today can mean greater security and prosperity for our Nation for decades to come.

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: The statement was released by the Office of the Press Secretary as part of the 2015 National Security Strategy.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting the 2015 National Security Strategy
February 6, 2015

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Consistent with section 108 of the National Security Act of 1947, as amended (50 U.S.C. 3043), I transmit herewith the National Security Strategy of the United States.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to John A. Boehner, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate.

The President's Weekly Address
February 7, 2015

Hi, everybody. I'm talking with you today from Ivy Tech Community College in Indianapolis, where I just held a town hall and heard from everyday Americans about what we can do together to make their lives a little better.

This week, we got news that confirms what we already know: that our businesses continue to create jobs for hard-working folks all across the country. Last month, America's businesses added another 267,000 jobs. In 2014, our economy created more than 3.1 million jobs in all, the best year for job growth since the late 1990s. All told, over the past 59 months, the private sector has added 11.8 million new jobs, the longest streak on record. And in the single most hopeful sign for middle class families, wages are rising again.

So America is poised for another good year, as long as Washington works to keep this progress going. We have to choose: Will we accept an economy where only a few of us do spectacularly well, or will we build an economy where everyone who works hard can get ahead?

Because while we've come a long way, we've got more work to do to make sure that our recovery reaches more Americans, not just those at the top. That's what middle class economics is all about: the idea that this country does best when everyone gets their fair shot, everyone does their fair share, and everyone plays by the same set of rules.

This week, I sent Congress a budget built on middle class economics. It helps families afford childcare, health care, college, paid leave at work, homeownership, and saving for retirement, and it could put thousands of dollars back into the pockets of a working family each year. It helps more Americans learn new skills to earn higher wages, including by making 2 years of community college free for responsible students all across the country. It invests in the research and infrastructure our

businesses need to compete and create high-paying jobs. And it pays for this with smart spending cuts and by fixing a Tax Code that's riddled with special-interest loopholes for folks who don't need them, allowing us to offer tax breaks to students and families who do need them.

I believe this is where we need to go to give working families more security in a time of constant economic change. And I'll work with anyone, Republican or Democrat, who wants to get to "yes" on these issues. We won't agree on everything, and that's natural. But we should stop refighting old battles and start working together to help you succeed in the new economy.

That's what you elected us to do: not to turn everything into another Washington food fight, but to have debates that are worthy of this country and to build an economy not just where everyone can share in America's success, but where everyone can contribute to America's success.

Thanks, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 3:30 p.m. on February 6 in Conference Room 121 of the Corporate College and Culinary Center at Ivy Tech Community College in Indianapolis, IN, for broadcast on February 7. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 6, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on February 7.

Statement on the Death of Dean E. Smith
February 8, 2015

Last night America lost not just a coaching legend, but a gentleman and a citizen. When he retired, Dean Smith had won more games than any other college basketball coach in history. He went to 11 Final Fours, won 2 national titles, and reared a generation of players who went on to even better things elsewhere, including a young man named Michael Jordan—and all of us from Chicago are thankful for that.

But more importantly, Coach Smith showed us something that I've seen again and again on the court: that basketball can tell us a lot more about who you are than a jump shot alone ever could. He graduated more than 96 percent of his players and taught his teams to point to the teammate who passed them the ball after a basket. He pushed forward the civil rights movement, recruiting the first Black scholarship athlete to North Carolina and helping to integrate a restaurant and a neighborhood in Chapel Hill. And in his final years, Coach Smith showed us how to fight an illness with courage and dignity. For all of that, I couldn't have been prouder to honor Coach Smith with Medal of Freedom in 2013.

Michelle and I send our thoughts and prayers to his wife Linnea, to his family, and to his fans all across North Carolina and the country.

NOTE: The statement referred to Michael Jordan, former guard, National Basketball Association's Chicago Bulls; and Charles J. Scott, former guard, NBA's Phoenix Suns.

The President's News Conference With Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany
February 9, 2015

President Obama. Good morning, everybody. Please be seated. As always, it is a great pleasure to welcome my close friend and partner, Chancellor Angela Merkel, back to the White House. Angela, of course, has been here many times. But this visit is a chance for me to congratulate her on two achievements. Well into her third term, Angela is now one of Ger-

many's longest serving Chancellors. Perhaps more importantly, this is my first opportunity to publicly congratulate Angela and Germany on their fourth World Cup title. [*Laughter*] As we all saw in Rio, Angela is one of her team's biggest fans. Our U.S. team, however, gets better each World Cup, so watch out in 2018. [*Laughter*]

Germany is one of us—our strongest allies, so whenever we meet, it's an opportunity to coordinate closely on a whole range of issues critical to our shared security and prosperity. As Angela and our German friends prepare to host the G–7 this spring, it's also important for us to be able to coordinate on a set of shared goals.

And at our working lunch this afternoon, we'll focus on what we can do to keep the economy growing and creating jobs. As strong supporters of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, we agree that there needs to be meaningful progress this year toward an agreement that boosts our economies with strong protections for consumers and workers and the environment.

I look forward to hearing Angela's assessment of how Europe and the IMF can work with the new Greek Government to find a way that returns Greece to sustainable growth within the euro zone, where growth is critical to both the United States and the global economy. And we'll be discussing our work to get all major economies to take ambitious action on climate change, including our initiative to limit public financing for coal-fired power plants overseas and our global efforts to phase down some of the most dangerous greenhouse gases.

Our discussion this morning focused on global security issues. We reaffirmed our commitment to training Afghan security forces and supporting a sovereign, secure, and united Afghanistan. We agree that the international community has to continue enforcing existing sanctions as part of our diplomatic effort to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon, even as the P5-plus-1 works closely together to do everything we can to try to achieve a good, verifiable deal.

Two issues in particular that dominated our workday this morning: Russia's aggression against Ukraine and the international fight against ISIL. With regard to Russia and the separatists it supports in Ukraine, it's clear that they've violated just about every commitment they made in the Minsk agreement. Instead of withdrawing from eastern Ukraine, Russian forces continue to operate there, training separatists and helping to coordinate attacks. Instead of withdrawing its arms, Russia has sent in more tanks and armored personnel carriers and heavy artillery. With Russian support, the separatists have seized more territory and shelled civilian areas, destroyed villages and driven more Ukrainians from their homes. These are the facts.

But Russian aggression has only reinforced the unity of the United States and Germany and our allies and partners around the world. And I want to thank Angela for her strong leadership and partnership as we've met this challenge. Chancellor Merkel and Vice President Biden met with Ukrainian President Poroshenko in Munich over the weekend, and Angela also shared with me the results of her talks in Moscow. We continue to encourage a diplomatic resolution to this issue. And as diplomatic efforts continue this week, we are in absolute agreement that the 21st century cannot stand idle—have us stand idle and simply allow the borders of Europe to be redrawn at the barrel of a gun.

So today we've agreed to move forward with our strategy. Along with our NATO allies, we'll keep bolstering our presence in Central and Eastern Europe, part of our unwavering article 5 obligation to our collective defense. We will continue to work with the IMF and other partners to provide Ukraine with critical financial support as it pursues economic and anticorruption reforms. We discussed the issue of how best to assist Ukraine as it defends itself, and we agreed that sanctions on Russia need to remain fully in force until Russia complies fully with its obligations.

Even as we continue to work for a diplomatic solution, we are making it clear again today that if Russia continues on its current course—

which is ruining the Russian economy and hurting the Russian people, as well as having such a terrible effect on Ukraine—Russia's isolation will only worsen, both politically and economically.

With regard to ISIL, Germany and the United States remain united in our determination to destroy this barbaric organization. I thanked Angela for her strong support as a member of the international coalition that is working in Iraq. In a significant milestone in its foreign policy, Germany has taken the important step of equipping Kurdish forces in Iraq, and Germany is preparing to lead the training mission of local forces in Erbil. Germany is a close partner in combating the threat of foreign terrorist fighters, which was the focus of a special session of the U.N. Security Council that I chaired last fall. And under Angela's leadership, Germany is moving ahead with new legislation to prevent fighters from traveling to and from Syria and Iraq.

At the same time, both Angela and I recognize that young people in both our countries, especially in Muslim communities, are being threatened and targeted for recruitment by terrorists like Al Qaida and ISIL. And protecting our young people from this hateful ideology so that they're not vulnerable to such recruitment is, first and foremost, a task for local communities, families, neighbors, faith leaders who know their communities best. But we can help these communities, starting with the tone and the example that we set in our own countries.

So I want to commend Angela for her leadership: her leadership speaking out forcefully against xenophobia and prejudice and on behalf of pluralism and diversity. She's made it clear that all religious communities have a place in Germany, just as they do here in the United States. And we're grateful that our German friends will be joining us at our summit next week on countering violent extremism, because this is a challenge our countries have to meet together.

And let me end on a historic note. This year marks the 70th anniversary of the end of the Second World War. It marks the 25th anniversary of the reunification of Germany. So in a time when conflicts around the world sometimes seem intractable, when progress sometimes seems beyond grasp, Germany's story gives us hope. We can end wars. Countries can rebuild. Adversaries can become allies. Walls can come down. Divisions can be healed. Germany's story and the story of Angela's life remind us that when free people stand united, our interests and our values will ultimately prevail.

And as we look to the future, as I prepare to visit Bavaria in June, I'm grateful for my partnership with Angela, as Americans are grateful for their partnership with the people of Germany.

Chancellor Merkel.

Chancellor Merkel. Thank you, President, dear Barack. I'm delighted to be back in Washington. Nine months ago, we were here for the last time, and this visit here has a lot to do with, first and foremost, the fact that we have assumed the Presidency of the G–7 Presidency this year and that we coordinate on these matters very closely, as we do on others. And obviously, we will address issues related to the global economy when we meet in Bavaria, on Schloss Elmau, in the summer.

From a European vantage point, I think we can say that we have made significant progress in a number of areas. We have countries who are now back on the growth path. Ireland comes to mind here in particular, but also Spain and Portugal. After a strong phase of structural reforms, they have now made significant progress. The new Commission—the new European Commissioner that's come in office has launched a growth program with—in which Germany will participate.

We will pin our hopes basically on growth and infrastructure, but also on other growth projects, for example, the digital economy. If I think of the state of the digital economy in the United States, there is a lot of things to be done by the Europeans now.

I would say that a free trade agreement, the conclusion of a free trade agreement, for example, would also go a long way towards boosting growth. We know that you are very much

engaged in the Asian-Pacific area; there are a lot of free trade agreements there as well. And Germany will come out very forcefully in seeing that the negotiations between the EU and the United States on free trade agreements are pursued in a vigorous manner. It's in our own vested interest: in the interest of the United States, but also in the German interest.

We are dealing basically on our G–7 agenda with health issues. Let me just mention one: What sort of lessons have we drawn, for example, from the terrible Ebola epidemic? I think the one thing that we've learned is that the international organizations, the international community has to be quicker in reacting to such epidemics. And the G–7 can give a very important contribution to doing this.

And we're also interested, for example, in seeing Gavi be successful. We're delighted to be able to conclude the replenishment conference that has just been completed in Germany so successfully.

Then, we dealt with security issues this morning. It is true Germany this year celebrates the 25th anniversary of its reunification. This would not have been possible, not have been achievable without our transatlantic partners, without the support of the United States of America. And we will always be grateful for this. And it is one case in point that it is well worth the effort to stand by one's values for decades to pursue long-term goals and not relent in those efforts.

After we thought in the nineties maybe that things would turn out somewhat more easily, somewhat less complicated, now we see ourselves confronted with a whole wealth of conflicts, and very complex ones. I said we worked together in Afghanistan; we talked about this as well. Germany has decided, in its fight against IS, to give help to deliver training missions, to deliver also weapons, if necessary. We work together on the Iran nuclear program, where we also enter into a crucial phase of negotiations.

One particular priority was given to the conflict between Ukraine and Russia this morning. We stand up for the same principles of inviolability of territorial integrity. For somebody who comes from Europe, I can only say if we give up this principle of territorial integrity of countries, then we will not be able to maintain the peaceful order of Europe that we've been able to achieve. This is not just any old point, it's an essential, a crucial point, and we have to stand by it. And Russia has violated the territorial integrity of Ukraine in two respects: in Crimea and also in Donetsk and Luhansk.

So we are called upon now to come up with solutions, but not in the sense of a mediator, but we also stand up for the interests of the European peaceful order. And this is what the French President and I have been trying to do over the past few days. We're going to continue those efforts.

And I'm very grateful that throughout the Ukraine crisis, we have been in very, very close contact with the United States of America and Europe on sanctions, on diplomatic initiatives. And this is going to be continued. And I think that's, indeed, one of the most important messages we can send to Russia and need to send to Russia.

We continue to pursue a diplomatic solution, although we have suffered a lot of setbacks. These days we will see whether all sides are ready and willing to come to a negotiated settlement. I've always said I don't see a military solution to this conflict, but we have to put all our efforts in bringing about a diplomatic solution.

So there's a whole host of issues that we need to discuss. Over lunch, we will continue to talk about climate protection, about sustainable development, and the sustainable development goals.

So yet again, thank you very much for the very close cooperation, very close coordination, and the possibility to have an exchange of views on all of these crucial issues. I think not only in hindsight can we safely say that the United States have always stood by us, have helped us to regain our unity in peace and freedom, but we can only—also say we continue to cooperate closely if it is about solving the conflicts of the world today. Unfortunately, there are many of them, and we will continue to do so in the future.

Thank you for your hospitality.

President Obama. First question, Steve Mufson, Washington Post.

Ukraine

Q. Thank you. You've said—stressed that U.S. and Europe need to have cohesion on the issue of sanctions and on dealing with the Ukraine, and yet the administration is discussing sending lethal weapons to Ukraine, which is very different from what the Chancellor said over the weekend. So I was wondering whether this was a good cop, bad cop act, or is this a real reflection of difference of views in the situation on the ground?

And more broadly, if there's no agreement this week, what lies ahead? Are we looking at a broader set of sanctions? What makes us think those set of sanctions will change the Russian President's mind any more than the current ones?

President Obama. Okay. Well, let me start with the broader point. I think both Angela and I have emphasized that the prospect for a military solution to this problem has always been low. Russia obviously has a extraordinarily powerful military. And given the length of the Russian border with Ukraine, given the history between Russia and Ukraine, expecting that if Russia is determined, that Ukraine can fully rebuff a Russian Army has always been unlikely.

But what we have said is that the international community, working together, can ratchet up the costs for the violation of the core principle of sovereignty and territorial integrity. And that's exactly what we've done.

And Russia has paid a significant cost for its actions: first in Crimea and now in eastern Ukraine. It has not yet dissuaded Mr. Putin from following the course that he is on, but it has created a measurable negative impact on the Russian economy, and that will continue.

My hope is that through these diplomatic efforts, those costs have become high enough that Mr. Putin's preferred option is for a diplomatic resolution. And I won't prejudge whether or not they'll be successful. If they are successful, it will be in part because of the extraordinary patience and effort of Chancellor Merkel and her team. If they are not, then we will continue to raise those costs. And we will not relent in that. And one of the things I've very encouraged about is the degree to which we've been able to maintain U.S.-European unity on this issue.

Now, it is true that if in fact diplomacy fails, what I've asked my team to do is to look at all options—what other means can we put in place to change Mr. Putin's calculus—and the possibility of lethal defensive weapons is one of those options that's being examined. But I have not made a decision about that yet. I have consulted with not just Angela, but will be consulting with other allies about this issue. It's not based on the idea that Ukraine could defeat a Russian Army that was determined. It is rather to see whether or not there are additional things we can do to help Ukraine bolster its defenses in the face of separatist aggression. But I want to emphasize that a decision has not yet been made.

One of the bigger issues that we're also concerned with, though, is making sure the Ukrainian economy is functioning and that President Poroshenko and Prime Minister Yatsenyuk can continue with the reform efforts that they've made. And I'm glad to see that because of our cooperation and our efforts, we're starting to see a package come together with the IMF, with the European Union, and others that can help bolster the European economy so that they have the space to continue to execute some of the reforms and anticorruption measures that they've made.

One of the most important things we can do for Ukraine is help them succeed economically, because that's how people on the ground feel this change, this transformation, inside of Ukraine. If that experiment fails, then the larger project of an independent Ukraine will fail. And so we're going to do everything we can to help bolster that.

But there is no doubt that if in fact diplomacy fails this week, there's going to continue to be a strong, unified response between the United States and Europe. That's not going to change. There may be some areas where there are tactical disagreements; there may not be.

But the broad principle that we have to stand up for the—not just Ukraine, but the principle of territorial integrity and sovereignty, is one where we are completely unified.

Chancellor Merkel. The French President and I have decided to make one further attempt to make progress through diplomatic means. We have the Minsk agreement—the Minsk agreement has never been implemented. Quite the contrary is true. The situation has actually worsened on the ground. So now there is a possibility to try and bring about a ceasefire and to also create conditions that are in place where you have not every day civilians dying, civil victims that fall prey to this. And I'm absolutely confident that we will do this together.

I, myself, actually would not be able to live with not having made this attempt. So there is anything but an assured success in all of this; I have to be very clear about this. But if at a certain point in time, one has to say that a success is not possible even if one puts every effort into it, then the United States and Europe have to sit together and try and explore further possibilities of what one can do. Just let me point out here that Foreign Ministers of the European Union last week already tasked the Commission to think about further possible sanctions.

On the issue of what is effective and what not, I'm somewhat surprised sometimes. Just let me mention Iran. For a fairly long period of time, we have had sanctions in place there; people don't seem to question them. And I think they have been fairly successful, if we look at the current state of affairs, what with the negotiations on the nuclear program. So I think, in parallel, I think it was a very good thing to put some costs onto the Russians through these sanctions that we agreed on, because we see also that Russia seems to be influenced by this. And this is why I am a hundred-percent behind these decisions.

As to the export of arms, I have given you my opinion. But you may rest assured that no matter what we decide, the alliance between the United States and Europe will continue to stand, will continue to be solid, even though in—on certain issues, we may not always agree. But this partnership—be it on Ukraine and Russia, be it on combating terrorism on the international stage, be it on other issues—is a partnership that has stood the test of time and that is—I mean, in Europe, we're very close. But this transatlantic partnership for Germany and for Europe is indispensable. And this will remain so. And I can say this also on behalf of my colleagues in the European Union.

Sorry, I have to call you myself—[*inaudible*]. From DPA, the German Press Agency.

U.S. Military Assistance to Ukraine/Russia-U.S. Relations/Former National Security Agency Contractor Edward J. Snowden/National Security Agency's Electronic Surveillance Program/Germany-U.S. Relations

Q. President, you said that you have not yet made a decision as to whether weapons ought to be delivered to Ukraine. What would be your red line? What would be the red line that needs to be crossed for you to decide an armament of the Ukrainian Army? And what do you think—will this hold by way of a promise? Because the Chancellor said it will make matters worse. And what can the Nobel Laureate Obama do more to defuse this conflict?

And, Madam Chancellor, President Putin today demanded yet again that the Government in Kiev negotiate directly with the separatists. When do you think the right moment has come to do this? And with looking at all of the big issues that you discussed, this breach of confidence due to the NSA affair, has—of the U.S.-German relations, has that played a role today?

President Obama. Do you want to go first, Angela?

Chancellor Merkel. I can gladly start. The question as to how one assesses the effectiveness of certain measures has been actually dealt with. The President has not yet made a decision, as he said. What's important for me is that we stand very closely together on the question of a renewed diplomatic effort. We keep each other of—informed. We're in close touch. And nobody wishes more for a success than the two of us who stand here side by side.

But this would also mean not only having a cease-fire in place, but to also, over and above that, having certain rules in place. And you said that the Russian President himself thinks there ought to be direct contracts. Let me just point out to you, these direct contracts already exist through the Trilateral Contact Group with representatives from Donetsk and Luhansk. And the problem of the last few days and the problem of the last meetings actually was rather more than that there was not really that much of an end result—if they met at all, or if representatives from Donetsk and Luhansk were there at all. Sometimes, they didn't even arrive.

And this was, after all, for me, the core of the Minsk agreement, that there are local elections in accordance with the Ukrainian Constitution and that the outcome of that is that you have representatives, authorities that can speak for those regions. And the Ukrainian President has paved the way for this, to giving certain specific status to the oblasts of Luhansk and Donetsk. And these elections are an essential point that will then enable us to say, well, maybe now there can be contacts even without a trilateral group.

And this is actually on the agenda of the many talks that we need to make. But I can very well understand the Ukrainian side, that on the territory they consider to be part of their territory and that anything else would violate their territorial integrity, that they want to actually see that elections take place there. And that has also been stated by President Putin that he wishes to see those elections happening there.

Now, on the NSA issue, I think there are still different assessments on individual issues there, but if we look at the sheer dimension of the terrorist threat, we are more than aware of the fact that we need to work together very closely. And I, as German Chancellor, want to state here very clearly that the institutions of the United States of America have provided us and still continue to provide us with a lot of very significant, very important information that also ensures our security. And we don't want to do without this. There are other possibilities, through the cyber dialogue, for example, to continue to talk about the sort of protection of privacy versus data protection and so on, and security. But this was basically—combating terrorism was basically in the foreground today.

President Obama. On providing lethal weapons to Ukraine, it's important to point out that we have been providing assistance to the Ukrainian military generally. That's been part of a longstanding relationship between NATO and Ukraine. And our goal has not been for Ukraine to be equipped to carry on offensive operations, but to simply defend itself. And President Poroshenko has been very clear: He's not interested in escalating violence, he is interested in having his country's boundaries respected by its neighbor.

So there's not going to be any specific point at which I say, ah, clearly, lethal defensive weapons would be appropriate here. It is our ongoing analysis of what can we do to dissuade Russia from encroaching further and further on Ukrainian territory. Our hope is, is that that's done through diplomatic means.

And I just want to emphasize here once again for the benefit not just of the American people, but for the German people: We are not looking for Russia to fail. We are not looking for Russia to be surrounded and contained and weakened. Our preference is for a strong, prosperous, vibrant, confident Russia that can be a partner with us on a whole host of global challenges. And that's how I operated throughout my first term in office.

Unfortunately, Russia has made a decision that I think is bad for them strategically, bad for Europe, bad for the world. And in the face of this aggression and these bad decisions, we can't simply try to talk them out of it. We have to show them that the world is unified in imposing a cost for this aggression. And that's what we're going to continue to do.

With respect to the NSA, I'll just make this point very briefly. There's no doubt that the Snowden revelations damaged impressions of Germans with respect to the U.S. Government and our intelligence cooperation. And what I have done over the last year, year and a half, is

to systematically work through some of these issues to create greater transparency and to restore confidence not just for Germans, but for our partners around the world.

And we've taken some unprecedented measures, for example, to ensure that our intelligence agencies treat non-U.S. citizens in ways that are consistent with due process and their privacy concerns, something that I put in a Presidential order and has not been ever done, not only by our intelligence agencies, but I think by most intelligence agencies around the world.

There are going to still be areas where we've got to work through these issues. We have to internally work through some of these issues, because they're complicated, they're difficult. If we are trying to track a network that is planning to carry out attacks in New York or Berlin or Paris, and they are communicating primarily in cyberspace, and we have the capacity to stop an attack like that, but that requires us then being able to operate within that cyberspace, how do we make sure that we're able to do that, carry out those functions, while still meeting our core principles of respecting the privacy of all our people?

And given Germany's history, I recognize the sensitivities around this issue. What I would ask would be that the German people recognize that the United States has always been on the forefront of trying to promote civil liberties, that we have traditions of due process that we respect, that we have been a consistent partner of yours in the course of the last 70 years, and certainly the last 25 years, in reinforcing the values that we share. And so occasionally, I would like the German people to give us the benefit of the doubt, given our history, as opposed to assuming the worst; assuming that we have been consistently your strong partners and that we share a common set of values.

And if we have that fundamental, underlying trust, there are going to be times where there are disagreements and both sides may make mistakes and there are going to be irritants like there are between friends, but the underlying foundation for the relationship remains sound.

Christi Parsons [Los Angeles Times].

Iran/Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel/Israel-U.S. Relations

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. The Iran nuclear negotiators have now missed two deadlines. Should the upcoming March deadline for talks be the final one? And what are the circumstances in which you think it would be wise to extend those talks? Also, sir, some have suggested that you are outraged by the Israeli Prime Minister's decision to address Congress. Is that so? And how would you advise Democrats who are considering a boycott?

President Obama. First of all, we understood, I think, from the start, when we set up the interim agreement with Iran, that it would take some time to work through incredibly complex issues and a huge trust deficit between the United States and Iran and the world and Iran, when it comes to their nuclear program. So I think there was always the assumption that, although the interim agreement lasted a certain period of time, that we would probably need more time to move forward.

The good news is, is that there have been very serious discussions. That time has been well spent. During this period of time, issues have been clarified, gaps have been narrowed, the Iranians have abided by the agreement. So this is not a circumstance in which, by talking, they've been stalling and meanwhile advancing their program. To the contrary: What we know is, the program has not only been frozen, but with respect to, for example, 20-percent enriched uranium, they've reversed it. And so we're in a better position than we were before the interim program was set up.

Having said all that, the issues now are sufficiently narrowed and sufficiently clarified where we're at a point where they need to make a decision. We are presenting to them, in a unified fashion—the P5-plus-1, supported by a coalition of countries around the world, are presenting to them a deal that allows them to have peaceful nuclear power but gives us the absolute assurance—that is verifiable—that they are not pursuing a nuclear weapon.

And if in fact what they claim is true—which is they have no aspiration to get a nuclear weapon, that, in fact, according to their Supreme Leader, it would be contrary to their faith to obtain a nuclear weapon—if that is true, there should be the possibility of getting a deal. They should be able to get to "yes." But the—we don't know if that's going to happen. They have their hardliners; they have their politics.

And the point, I guess is, Christi, at this juncture, I don't see a further extension being useful if they have not agreed to the basic formulation and the bottom line that the world requires to have confidence that they're not pursuing a nuclear weapon.

Now, if the framework for a deal is done, if people have a clear sense of what is required and there's some drafting and t's to cross and i's to dot, that's a different issue. But my view—and I've presented this to Members of Congress—is that we now know enough that the issues are no longer technical. The issues now are, does Iran have the political will and the desire to get a deal done?

And we could not be doing this were it not for the incredible cohesion and unity that's been shown by Germany, by the other members of the P5-plus-1, which, I should acknowledge, includes Russia. I mean, this is an area where they've actually served a constructive role. And China has served a constructive role. And there has been no cracks in this on the P5-plus-1 side of the table. And I think that's a testament to the degree to which we are acting reasonably in trying to actually solve a problem.

With respect to Prime Minister Netanyahu, as I've said before, I talk to him all the time, our teams constantly coordinate. We have a practice of not meeting with leaders right before their elections, 2 weeks before their elections. As much as I love Angela, if she was 2 weeks away from an election, she probably would not have received an invitation to the White House—[*laughter*]—and I suspect she wouldn't have asked for one. So the—[*laughter*].

So this is just—some of this just has to do with how we do business. And I think it's important for us to maintain these protocols, because the U.S.-Israeli relationship is not about a particular party. This isn't a relationship founded on affinity between the Labor Party and the Democratic Party or Likud and the Republican Party. This is the U.S.-Israeli relationship that extends beyond parties and has to do with that unbreakable bond that we feel and our commitment to Israel's security and the shared values that we have.

And the way to preserve that is to make sure that it doesn't get clouded with what could be perceived as partisan politics. Whether that's accurate or not, that is a potential perception, and that's something that we have to guard against.

Now, I don't want to be coy. The Prime Minister and I have a very real difference around Iran, Iran sanctions. I have been very clear—and Angela agrees with me, and David Cameron agrees with me, and the others who are a member of the negotiations agree—that it does not make sense to sour the negotiations a month or two before they're about to be completed. And we should play that out. If in fact we can get a deal, then we should embrace that. If we can't get a deal, then we'll have to make a set of decisions, and as I've said to Congress, I'll be the first one to work with them to apply even stronger measures against Iran.

But what's the rush, unless your view is that it's not possible to get a deal with Iran and it shouldn't even be tested? And that I cannot agree with because, as the President of the United States, I'm looking at what the options are if we don't get a diplomatic resolution. And those options are narrow, and they're not attractive. And from the perspective of U.S. interests—and I believe from the perspective of Israel's interests, although I can't speak for, obviously, the Israeli Government—it is far better if we can get a diplomatic solution.

So there are real differences substantively, but that's separate and apart from the whole issue of Mr. Netanyahu coming to Washington. All right?

Ukraine/U.S. Military Assistance to Ukraine

Q. Mr.—[*inaudible*]—please. Ms. Merkel, you just said the question is, what will be effective in the Ukrainian crisis? And diplomacy, as you said yourself, has not really made all that—has not really brought about that much of a progress. Can you understand the impatience of the Americans when they say we ought to now deliver weapons? And what makes you feel confident that diplomacy will carry the day in the next few days and weeks?

And on Greece, obviously, I also have to ask you, what is your comment on the most recent comments of the Greek Prime Minister, who says, let's end those programs, and I'm going to stand by the promises I made during the election campaign? How do you envisage the further cooperation with the Greek Government?

And to you, Mr. President, I address the question: There is quite a lot of pressure by members of your Government who say weapons should be delivered to the Ukrainians. Now, you yourself have said you want to ratchet up the cost that Putin has to bear and then make him relent and give in maybe. And you said all options have to be on the table, so apparently, also weapons. So what makes you so sure that these weapons will not only go into the hands of the regular Ukrainian Army, but will then also perhaps get into the hands of separatists—of militias—on the Ukrainian side, who are accused by Amnesty International and other NGOs of having violated human rights?

Thank you.

Chancellor Merkel. Whenever you have political conflict, such as the one that we have now between Russia and Ukraine, but also in many other conflicts around the world, it has always proved to be right to try again and again to solve such a conflict. We've spoken at some length about the Iranian conflict. Here too we are expected to try time and again. And there's always a point where you say, well, all of the options are on the table, we've gone back and forth, but then, one has to think again.

Looking just at the Middle East conflict, for example, how many people have tried to bring about a solution to this conflict? And I've welcomed it every time, and I'm going to participate and support it every time because I think every time it has been well worth the effort.

Now, when you have a situation now where every night you see people dying, you see civilian casualties, you see the dire conditions under which people die—live, it is our—it is incumbent upon us as politicians, we owe it to the people to explore every avenue until somebody gives in.

But we've grown up under conditions—I have to point this again—where we said nobody would have dreamt of German unity. The people who have said in West Germany, remember they said, well, should we keep up citizenship of Germany for the GDR? They've been criticized by people as some who have revanchist ideas. And then think of President Reagan when he said, "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall," standing in front of the Brandenburg Gate. Many people said at the time, how can he possibly say that? But it was right.

We have no guarantee. I cannot give you a guarantee for the outcome of the Wednesday talks or for other talks. And maybe nothing will come out of it. But then we're called upon again to think about a new possibility. And since we thought about every step of the way, will this be effective or not, we will continue to do so.

A lot of things have to be thought about, and I'm very glad that with the American President, I have always been able to put all of the cards on the table and discuss the pros and cons. In my speech in Munich, I gave you clearly where I stand. But we'll continue to try it. I think that's why we are politicians, that's why we chose these professions. Others have to do other things; researchers have to, all of the time, find new things to explore and we have to see that the well-being, the prosperity, of our people is ensured. But we never have a guarantee that the policies we adopt will work, will have the effect—oh, sorry, Greece. I almost forgot. Yes. On Wednesday, there's going to be a Eurogroup meeting. And I think what counts is what Greece will put on the table at

that Eurogroup meeting or perhaps a few days later.

The German policy, ever since 2010, has been aimed at Greece staying a member of the euro zone. I've said this time and again. The basic rules have always been the same. You put in your own efforts, and on the other side, you're being shown solidarity as a quid pro quo. The three institutions of the "Troika"—the ECB, the European Union Commission, and the IMF—have agreed on programs. These programs are the basis of any discussion we have. I've always said I will wait for Greece to come with a sustainable proposal and then we'll talk about this.

President Obama. The point Angela made, I think, is right, which is, we never have guarantees that any particular course of action works. As I've said before, by the time a decision reaches my desk, by definition, it's a hard problem with no easy answers. Otherwise, somebody else would have solved it, and I would never even hear about it.

The issue that you raised about, can we be certain that any lethal aid that we provide Ukraine is used properly, doesn't fall into the wrong hands, does not lead to overaggressive actions that can't be sustained by the Ukrainians, what kinds of reactions does it prompt not simply from the separatists, but from the Russians—those are all issues that have to be considered. The measure by which I make these decisions is, is it more likely to be effective than not? And that is what our deliberations will be about.

But what I do know is this: that the United States and Europe have not stood idly by. We have made enormous efforts, enormous investments of dollars, of political capital, of diplomacy, in trying to resolve this situation. I think the Ukrainian people can feel confident that we have stood by them. People like Vice President Biden and Secretary of State Kerry have spent countless hours on this issue, as has Angela and her team on the German side. And just because we have not yet gotten the outcome that we want doesn't mean that this pressure is not, over time, making a difference.

I think it's fair to say that there are those inside of Russia who recognize this has been a disastrous course for the Russian economy. I think Mr. Putin is factoring that in. But understandably, until the situation is entirely resolved, we're going to have to keep on trying different things to see if we can get a better outcome.

What I do know is, is that we will not be able to succeed unless we maintain the strong transatlantic solidarity that's been the hallmark of our national security throughout the last 70 years. And I'm confident that I've got a great partner in Angela in maintaining that. All right?

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 12:04 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia; Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Hoseini-Khamenei of Iran; and Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization. Chancellor Merkel referred to Vice-President for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness Jyrki Katainen of the European Commission; President François Hollande of France; and former President Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev of the Soviet Union. She also referred to the Gavi vaccine alliance, an international organization aimed at distributing vaccines to children in developing countries. A reporter referred to Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras of Greece. Chancellor Merkel and two reporters spoke in German, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Statement on the Death of Kayla J. Mueller
February 10, 2015

It is with profound sadness that we have learned of the death of Kayla Jean Mueller. On behalf of the American people, Michelle and I convey our deepest condolences to Kayla's family—her parents Marsha and Carl, and her brother Eric and his family—and all of those who loved Kayla dearly. At this time of unimaginable suffering, the country shares in their grief.

Kayla dedicated her life to helping others in need at home and around the world. In Prescott, Arizona, she volunteered at a women's shelter and worked at an HIV/AIDS clinic. She worked with humanitarian organizations in India, Israel, and the Palestinian Territories, compelled by her desire to serve others. Eventually, her path took her to Turkey, where she helped provide comfort and support to Syrian refugees forced to flee their homes during the war. Kayla's compassion and dedication to assisting those in need shows us that even amongst unconscionable evil, the essential decency of humanity can live on.

Kayla represents what is best about America and expressed her deep pride in the freedoms that we Americans enjoy and that so many others strive for around the world. She said: "Here we are. Free to speak out without fear of being killed, blessed to be protected by the same law we are subjected to, free to see our families as we please, free to cross borders, and free to disagree. We have many people to thank for these freedoms, and I see it as an injustice not to use them to their fullest."

Kayla Mueller used these freedoms she so cherished to improve the lives of others. In how she lived her life, she epitomized all that is good in our world. She has been taken from us, but her legacy endures, inspiring all those who fight, each in their own way, for what is just and what is decent. No matter how long it takes, the United States will find and bring to justice the terrorists who are responsible for Kayla's captivity and death.

ISIL is a hateful and abhorrent terrorist group whose actions stand in stark contrast to the spirit of people like Kayla. On this day, we take comfort in the fact that the future belongs not to those who destroy, but rather to the irrepressible force of human goodness that Kayla Mueller shall forever represent.

NOTE: The statement referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

Remarks on the United States Response to the Ebola Epidemic in West Africa
February 11, 2015

The President. Thank you. Please, everybody, have a seat. Thank you. Thank you, everybody. Well, thank you, Rear Admiral Giberson, not only for the introduction, but for your extraordinary leadership and your service.

Last summer, as Ebola spread in West Africa, overwhelming public health systems and threatening to cross more borders, I said that fighting this disease had to be more than a national security priority, but an example of American leadership. After all, whenever and wherever a disaster or a disease strikes, the world looks to us to lead. And because of extraordinary people like the ones standing behind me and many who are in the audience, we have risen to the challenge.

Now, remember, there was no small amount of skepticism about our chances. People were understandably afraid, and if we're honest, some stoked those fears. But we believed that if we made policy based not on fear, but on sound science and good judgment, America could lead an effective global response while keeping the American people safe and we could turn the tide of the epidemic.

We believed this because of people like Rear Admiral Giberson. We believed this because of outstanding leaders like Raj Shah at USAID and Tom Frieden at the CDC. We believed it because of the men and women behind me and the many others here at home and who are still overseas who respond to challenges like this one not only with skill and professionalism, but with courage and with dedication. And because of your extraordinary work, we have made enormous progress in just a few months.

So the main reason we're actually here today is for me to say thank you. Thank you to the troops and public health workers who left their loved ones to head into the heart of the Ebola epidemic in West Africa, and many of them did so over the holidays. Thank you to the health care professionals here at home who treated our returning heroes like Dr. Kent Brantly and Dr. Craig Spencer. Thank you to Dr. Tony Fauci and Nancy Sullivan and the incredible scientists at NIH, who worked long days and late nights to develop a vaccine. All of you represent what is best about America and what's possible when we lead.

And we're also here to mark a transition in our fight against this disease—not to declare mission accomplished, but to mark a transition. Thanks to the hard work of our nearly 3,000 troops who deployed to West Africa, logistics have been set up, Ebola treatment units have been built, over 1,500 African health workers have been trained, and volunteers around the world have gained the confidence to join the fight. We were a force multiplier. It wasn't just what we put in. It's the fact that when we put it in, people looked around and said, all right, America has got our back, so we'll come too. And as a result, more than 1,500 of our troops have been able to return.

Today I'm announcing that by April 30, all but a hundred who will remain to help support the ongoing response, all but those hundred will also be able to come home, not because the job is done, but because they were so effective in setting up the infrastructure that we are now equipped to deal with the job that needs to be done in West Africa, not only with a broader international coalition, but also with folks who have been trained, who are from the countries that were most at risk.

So I want to be very clear here: While our troops are coming home, America's work is not done. Our mission is not complete. Today we move into the next phase of the fight, winding down our military response while expanding our civilian response. That starts here at home, where we're more prepared to protect Americans from infectious disease, but still have more work to do. For as long as Ebola simmers anywhere in the world, we will have some Ebola-fighting heroes who are coming back home with the disease from time to time. And that's why we're screening and monitoring all arrivals from affected countries. We've equipped more hospitals with new protective gear and protocols. We've developed partnerships with States and cities, thanks to public servants like Mayor Mike Rawlings and Judge Clay Jenkins of Dallas, Texas, who were on the front lines when the first case appeared here on our shores.

A few months ago, only 13 States had the capability to even test for Ebola. Today, we have more than 54 labs in 44 States. Only three facilities in the country were qualified to treat an Ebola patient. Today, we have 51 Ebola treatment centers. We have successfully treated eight Ebola patients here in the United States. And we are grateful to be joined by six of these brave survivors today, including Dr. Richard Sacra, who received world-class care at Nebraska Medical Center and a plasma donation from Dr. Kent Brantly. Then he returned to Liberia to treat non-Ebola patients who still need doctors. That's the kind of commitment and the kind of people we're dealing with here.

Meanwhile, in West Africa, it's true that we have led a massive global effort to combat this epidemic. We mobilized other countries to join us in making concrete, significant commitments to fight this disease and to strengthen global health systems for the long term. In addition to the work of our troops, our USAID DART teams have directed the response. Our CDC disease detectives have traced contacts. Our health care workers and scientists helped contain the outbreak. Our team is providing

support for 10,000 civilian responders on the ground.

That's what Brett Sedgewick did. Where's Brett? There here is. [*Laughter*] So Brett went to Liberia with Global Communities, which is an NGO that partnered with us to respond to Ebola. Brett supported safe-burial teams that traveled to farflung corners of Liberia to ensure that those who lost their lives to Ebola were carefully, safely, and respectfully buried so that they could not transmit the disease to anyone else. And Brett reflects the spirit of so many volunteers when he said, "If you need me, just say the word." That's a simple, but profound statement.

That's who we are: big-hearted and optimistic, reflecting the can-do spirit of the American people. That's our willingness to help those in need. They're the values of Navy Lieutenant Andrea McCoy and her team. Andrea, raise your hand so that I don't look so—[*laughter*]. Andrea and her team deployed some 7 tons of equipment, processed over 1,800 blood samples. They're the values that drive Commander Billy Pimentel. Where's Billy? Raise your hand.

Commander Guillermo "Billy" Pimentel, USN. Here, sir.

The President. Thank you, sir. [*Laughter*] Like that Navy can-do attitude.

He led a team of Naval microbiologists to set up mobile laboratories that can diagnose Ebola within 4 hours. And he said, "It has been an honor for us to use our skills to make a difference."

These values, American values, matter to the world. At the Monrovia Medical Unit in Liberia—built by American troops, staffed by Rear Admiral Giberson and his team from the U.S. Public Health Service Corps—a nurse's aide named Rachael Walker went in for treatment and left Ebola-free. And I want you to listen to what Rachael's sister said about all of you. "We were worried at first," she said, "but when we found out [Rachael] was being transferred to the American Ebola treatment unit, we thanked God first and then we thanked America second for caring about us."

And the Americans who she was speaking of aren't just doctors or nurses or soldiers or scientists. You're what one lieutenant commander from the U.S. Public Health Service Corps called the "hope multipliers." And you've multiplied a lot of hope. Last fall, we saw between 800 and 1,000 new cases a week. Today, we're seeing between 100 and 150 cases a week, a drop of more than 80 percent. Liberia has seen the best progress. Sierra Leone is moving in the right direction. Guinea has the longest way left to go.

Our focus now is getting to zero, because as long as there is even one case of Ebola that's active out there, risks still exist. Every case is an ember that, if not contained, can light a new fire. So we're shifting our focus from fighting the epidemic to now extinguishing it.

The reason we can do that is because of a bipartisan majority in Congress, including some of the Members who are here today, who approved funding to power this next phase of our response. And I want to thank those Members of Congress who are here for the outstanding work that they do. [*Applause*] Thank you. One of them, Chris Coons, recently traveled to the region and saw firsthand that we have to continue this fight in Africa.

So while our troops are coming home, plenty of American heroes remain on the ground, with even more on the way. Doctors and nurses are still treating patients, CDC experts are tracking cases, NIH teams are testing vaccines, USAID workers are in the field, and countless American volunteers are on the front lines. And while I take great pride in the fact that our Government organized this effort—and I particularly want to thank Secretary Burwell and her team at Health and Human Services for the outstanding work that they did—we weren't working alone. I just had a chance to meet with some leading philanthropists who did so much and are now committed to continuing the work and finding new ways in which we can build platforms not only to finish the job with respect to Ebola, but also to be able to do a more effective surveillance, prevention, and quick response for diseases in the future.

Other nations have joined the fight, and we're going to keep working together, because our common security depends on all of us. That's why we launched the Global Health Security Agenda last year to bring more nations together to better prevent and detect and respond to future outbreaks before they become epidemics. This was a wakeup call and why it's going to be so important for us to learn lessons from what we've done and sustain it into the future.

And in the 21st century, we cannot build moats around our countries. There are no drawbridges to be pulled up. We shouldn't try. What we should do is instead make sure everybody has basic health systems, from hospitals to disease detectives, to better laboratory networks, all of which allows us to get early warnings against outbreaks of diseases. This is not charity. The investments we make overseas are in our self-interest. This is not charity. We do this because the world is interconnected, in the same way that the investments we make in NIH are not a nice-to-do, they are a must-do. We don't appreciate basic science and all these folks in lab coats until there's a real problem and we say, well, do we have a cure for that, or can we fix it? And if we haven't made those investments, if we've neglected them, then they won't be there when we need them.

So as we transition into a new phase in this fight, make no mistake: America is as committed as ever, I am as committed as ever, to getting to zero. And I know we can. And I know this because of the people who stand behind me and the people out in the audience. I know this because of people like Dr. William Walters. William, you here?

Department of State Managing Director for Operational Medicine William A. Walters. Sir.

The President. Thank you. [*Laughter*]

Dr. Walters is the Director of Operational Medicine at the State Department. Last summer, he was called to help move Dr. Kent Brantly, who's here, back to the United States for treatment. And Dr. Walters says the first thing he did was to Google Dr. Brantly. [*Laughter*] A little plug for Google there. I know we've got some—[*laughter*]. And the first picture he saw was of Kent and his family.

Now, remember, the decision to move Kent back to the United States was controversial. Some worried about bringing the disease to our shores. But what folks like William knew was that we had to make the decisions based not on fear, but on science. And he knew that we needed to take care of our heroes who had sacrificed so much to save the lives of others in order for us to continue to get people to make that kind of commitment. They had to know we had their backs in order for us to effectively respond. And so, as William said, "We do the work we do to impact something bigger than ourselves." We do the work we do to impact something bigger than ourselves.

That's the test of American leadership. We have this extraordinary military. We have an extraordinary economy. We have unbelievable businesses. But what makes us exceptional is when there's a big challenge and we hear somebody saying it's too hard to tackle, and we come together as a nation and prove you wrong. That's true whether it's recession or war or terrorism. There are those who like to fan fears. But over the long haul, America does not succumb to fear. We master the moment with bravery and courage and selflessness and sacrifice and relentless, unbending hope. That's what these people represent. That's what's best in us. And we have to remember that, because there will be other circumstances like this in the future.

We had 3 weeks in which all too often we heard science being ignored and sensationalism, but you had folks like this who were steady and focused and got the job done. And we're lucky to have them, and we have to invest in them.

So I want to thank all of you for proving again what America can accomplish. God bless you. God bless the United States of America. Thank you. Good job.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:46 p.m. in the South Court Auditorium of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Kent P. Brantly, former medical director, Samaritan's Purse Ebola Case Management Center in Monro-

via, Liberia; Craig A. Spencer, physician, Doctors Without Borders; Richard A. Sacra, assistant professor, University of Massachusetts Medical School's Department of Family Medicine and Community Health; Nina Pham and Amber Vinson, nurses, Texas Health Presbyterian Hospital Dallas in Dallas, TX; Ian Crozier, former doctor, Kenema Government Hospital in Kenema, Sierra Leone; and Lt. Cmdr. Kate R. Migliaccio, public information officer, U.S. Public Health Service's Commissioned Corps.

Remarks on Proposed Legislation Submitted to the Congress To Authorize the Use of Military Force Against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) Terrorist Organization

February 11, 2015

Good afternoon. Today, as part of an international coalition of some 60 nations, including Arab countries, our men and women in uniform continue the fight against ISIL in Iraq and in Syria.

More than 2,000 coalition airstrikes have pounded these terrorists. We're disrupting their command and control and supply lines, making it harder for them to move. We're destroying their fighting positions, their tanks, their vehicles, their barracks, their training camps, and the oil and gas facilities and infrastructure that fund their operations. We're taking out their commanders, their fighters, and their leaders.

In Iraq, local forces have largely held the line and, in some places, have pushed ISIL back. In Syria, ISIL failed in its major push to take the town of Kobani, losing countless fighters in the process, fighters who will never again threaten innocent civilians. And we've seen reports of sinking morale among ISIL fighters as they realize the futility of their cause.

Now, make no mistake, this is a difficult mission, and it will remain difficult for some time. It's going to take time to dislodge these terrorists, especially from urban areas. But our coalition is on the offensive, ISIL is on the defensive, and ISIL is going to lose. Its barbaric murders of so many people, including American hostages, are a desperate and revolting attempt to strike fear in the hearts of people it can never possibly win over by its ideas or its ideology, because it offers nothing but misery and death and destruction. And with vile groups like this, there is only one option: With our allies and partners, we are going to degrade and ultimately destroy this terrorist group.

And when I announced our strategy against ISIL in September, I said that we are strongest as a nation when the President and Congress work together. Today my administration submitted a draft resolution to Congress to authorize the use of force against ISIL. I want to be very clear about what it does and what it does not do.

This resolution reflects our core objective to destroy ISIL. It supports the comprehensive strategy that we've been pursuing with our allies and our partners: a systemic and sustained campaign of airstrikes against ISIL in Iraq and Syria; support and training for local forces on the ground, including the moderate Syrian opposition; preventing ISIL attacks in the region and beyond, including by foreign terrorist fighters who try to threaten our countries; regional and international support for an inclusive Iraqi Government that unites the Iraqi people and strengthens Iraqi forces against ISIL; humanitarian assistance for the innocent civilians of Iraq and Syria, who are suffering so terribly under ISIL's reign of horror.

I want to thank Vice President Biden, Secretaries Kerry and Hagel, and General Marty Dempsey for their leadership in advancing our strategy. Even as we meet this challenge in Iraq and Syria, we all agree that one of our weapons against terrorists like ISIL—a critical part of our strategy—is the values we live here at home. One of the best antidotes to the hateful ideologies that try to recruit and radicalize

people to violent extremism is our own example as diverse and tolerant societies that welcome the contributions of all people, including people of all faiths.

The resolution we've submitted today does not call for the deployment of U.S. ground combat forces to Iraq or Syria. It is not the authorization of another ground war, like Afghanistan or Iraq. The 2,600 American troops in Iraq today largely serve on bases, and yes, they face the risks that come with service in any dangerous environment. But they do not have a combat mission. They are focused on training Iraqi forces, including Kurdish forces.

As I've said before, I'm convinced that the United States should not get dragged back into another prolonged ground war in the Middle East. That's not in our national security interest, and it's not necessary for us to defeat ISIL. Local forces on the ground who know their countries best are best positioned to take the ground fight to ISIL, and that's what they're doing.

At the same time, this resolution strikes the necessary balance by giving us the flexibility we need for unforeseen circumstances. For example, if we had actionable intelligence about a gathering of ISIL leaders, and our partners didn't have the capacity to get them, I would be prepared to order our Special Forces to take action, because I will not allow these terrorists to have a safe haven. So we need flexibility, but we also have to be careful and deliberate. And there is no heavier decision than asking our men and women in uniform to risk their lives on our behalf. As Commander in Chief, I will only send our troops into harm's way when it is absolutely necessary for our national security.

Finally, this resolution repeals the 2002 authorization of force for the invasion of Iraq and limits this new authorization to 3 years. I do not believe America's interests are served by endless war or by remaining on a perpetual war footing. As a nation, we need to ask the difficult and necessary questions about when, why, and how we use military force. After all, it is our troops who bear the costs of our decisions, and we owe them a clear strategy and the support they need to get the job done. So this resolution will give our Armed Forces and our coalition the continuity we need for the next 3 years.

It is not a timetable. It is not announcing that the mission is completed at any given period. What it is saying is that Congress should revisit the issue at the beginning of the next President's term. It's conceivable that the mission is completed earlier. It's conceivable that after deliberation, debate, and evaluation, that there are additional tasks to be carried out in this area. And the people's representatives, with a new President, should be able to have that discussion.

In closing, I want to say that in crafting this resolution we have consulted with, and listened to, both Republicans and Democrats in Congress. We have made a sincere effort to address difficult issues that we've discussed together. In the days and weeks ahead, we'll continue to work closely with leaders and Members of Congress on both sides of the aisle. I believe this resolution can grow even stronger with the thoughtful and dignified debate that this moment demands. I'm optimistic that it can win strong bipartisan support and that we can show our troops and the world that Americans are united in this mission.

Now, today, our men and women in uniform continue the fight against ISIL, and we salute them for their courageous service. We pray for their safety. We stand with their families who miss them and who are sacrificing here at home. But know this: Our coalition is strong, our cause is just, and our mission will succeed. And long after the terrorists we face today are destroyed and forgotten, America will continue to stand free and tall and strong.

May God bless our troops, and may God bless the United States of America. Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:37 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House.

Message to the Congress on Submitting Proposed Legislation To Authorize the Use of Military Force Against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) Terrorist Organization
February 11, 2015

To the Congress of the United States:

The so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) poses a threat to the people and stability of Iraq, Syria, and the broader Middle East, and to U.S. national security. It threatens American personnel and facilities located in the region and is responsible for the deaths of U.S. citizens James Foley, Steven Sotloff, Abdul-Rahman Peter Kassig, and Kayla Mueller. If left unchecked, ISIL will pose a threat beyond the Middle East, including to the United States homeland.

I have directed a comprehensive and sustained strategy to degrade and defeat ISIL. As part of this strategy, U.S. military forces are conducting a systematic campaign of airstrikes against ISIL in Iraq and Syria. Although existing statutes provide me with the authority I need to take these actions, I have repeatedly expressed my commitment to working with the Congress to pass a bipartisan authorization for the use of military force (AUMF) against ISIL. Consistent with this commitment, I am submitting a draft AUMF that would authorize the continued use of military force to degrade and defeat ISIL.

My Administration's draft AUMF would not authorize long-term, large-scale ground combat operations like those our Nation conducted in Iraq and Afghanistan. Local forces, rather than U.S. military forces, should be deployed to conduct such operations. The authorization I propose would provide the flexibility to conduct ground combat operations in other, more limited circumstances, such as rescue operations involving U.S. or coalition personnel or the use of special operations forces to take military action against ISIL leadership. It would also authorize the use of U.S. forces in situations where ground combat operations are not expected or intended, such as intelligence collection and sharing, missions to enable kinetic strikes, or the provision of operational planning and other forms of advice and assistance to partner forces.

Although my proposed AUMF does not address the 2001 AUMF, I remain committed to working with the Congress and the American people to refine, and ultimately repeal, the 2001 AUMF. Enacting an AUMF that is specific to the threat posed by ISIL could serve as a model for how we can work together to tailor the authorities granted by the 2001 AUMF.

I can think of no better way for the Congress to join me in supporting our Nation's security than by enacting this legislation, which would show the world we are united in our resolve to counter the threat posed by ISIL.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
February 11, 2015.

NOTE: The Office of the Press Secretary also released the text of the proposed legislation. An original was not available for verification of the content of this message.

Remarks on Signing the Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans Act
February 12, 2015

Thank you so much. Everybody, please have a seat. Well, good afternoon, everybody. On behalf of Michelle and myself, welcome to the White House. And thank you, Jake, for a moving tribute to your friend and your brother-in-arms. I think it's clear that Clay

Hunt lives on in you: in your devotion to his memory and your commitment to our country. So, Jake, on behalf of all of us, but especially, I think, on behalf of Clay's family and all his friends and fellow veterans who loved him too, thanks for your extraordinary service.

Today we honor a young man who isn't here, but should be here. Clay Hunt was a proud Texan. As a boy, I understand, he collected turtles—[*laughter*]—which was ironic for a kid who, by all accounts, never sat still. [*Laughter*] He loved the outdoors; he knew every inch of his grandparents' ranch, where he fished and hunted all year long. A decorated marine, he served with distinction in Iraq and Afghanistan. He suffered physical industries—injuries that healed, and he suffered invisible wounds that stayed with him. And by all accounts, he was selfless, and he was brave. And when he died in 2011, it was a heartbreaking loss for his family, his fellow marines, and our Nation. Because Clay had already done a great deal of good in the world, and the truth is, he was just getting started.

So we're here today to pick up where Clay left off. The best way to honor this young man who should be here is to make sure that more veterans like him are here for all the years to come and may—able to make extraordinary contributions, building on what they've already done for our safety and our security.

Clay was a passionate advocate for veterans. And now, more than ever, that's something we're all called to be. After 13 years, our combat mission in Afghanistan is over, and a new generation of veterans is coming home. And like Clay, they are talented, and they are ready to roll up their sleeves and begin the next chapter of their lives: starting companies, going back to school, reentering the workforce, raising families, becoming leaders in every field. And whether they found a new path or are just starting out on their new civilian life, one thing is certain: Every single veteran in America has something extraordinary to give to this country—every single one.

And at the same time, too many of our troops and veterans are still struggling. They're recovering from injuries. They're mourning fallen comrades. They're trying to reconnect with family and friends who can never fully understand what they went through in war theater. For many of them, the war goes on: in the flashbacks that come rushing forward and in the nightmares that don't go away.

And that tension between then and now, that struggle to make the transition from war to home, is one that Clay Hunt knew all too well. In Iraq and Afghanistan, he lost good friends. After one buddy died, Clay slept in his empty bunk for a while, to stay close just a little longer. A few weeks later, another friend was fatally shot right in front of him. There was nothing Clay could do to save him, but he was still wracked with grief and guilt. And when he got home, he found it hard to sleep and hard to go football games or anywhere that was loud or crowded.

Now, part of what made him remarkable was, he was able to name the problem; he understood it. Like many of our troops and veterans, Clay had posttraumatic stress. And as a country, we've been doing more to help our troops and veterans deal with injuries like posttraumatic stress. We've been doing more awareness and more outreach, and more counselors have been put in place to improve access to care. We've been doing more research and prevention—into prevention and treatment. And we've been saying loud and clear to anyone out there who's hurting: It's not a sign of weakness to ask for help, it's a sign of strength.

And Clay Hunt was strong that way. He asked for help. In fact, he did everything that we urge people with posttraumatic stress to do. He reached out to his family; they embraced him with love. He opened up to other veterans, and they were there for him too. He sought treatment, and not once, but repeatedly. And he channeled his stress into service. As part of Team Rubicon, as Jake described, he went to Haiti after the earthquake to help families rebuild. He refurbished bikes for injured veterans so they could join wounded warrior rides. He even appeared in a public service announcement, encouraging veterans having a tough time to reach out for help, because he

knew that even though you can't see it, posttraumatic stress is an injury just like any other and the stigma has to end.

And Clay received care through the VA, but he struggled to get the right medication and the right disability rating. And by the time the severity of his condition was recognized, it was too late, and Clay had taken his life just weeks before. And he was 28 years old.

Amid unimaginable grief, Clay's family, Jake, and his fellow veterans made it their mission to spare any more families the pain they endured. So they shared Clay's story far and wide. And they reached out to Members of Congress, and they lobbied, and they testified and made personal appeals.

And thanks to their tireless efforts—and we are particularly grateful to Clay's family being able to transform grief into action—today I will sign the Clay Hunt SAV Act into law. And SAV stands for "Suicide Prevention for American Veterans." It helps fill critical gaps in serving veterans with posttraumatic stress and other illnesses. It increases peer support and outreach to servicemembers transitioning to civilian life. It recruits talented psychiatry students to work at the VA after graduation. It makes it easier for veterans to find the care they need when they need it. And it includes strict accountability measures so we can track and continually improve these efforts as we learn more.

Now, this law is not a complete solution. We've still got a lot more work to do. Our Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Bob McDonald, is here and is doing a terrific job pushing reforms to get our veterans the care that they deserve. But one of the messages I want to make sure to deliver today, and I know that the First Lady and Jill Biden and others have been delivering this continually through their Joining Forces effort: This is not just a job for government. Every community, every American, can reach out and do more with and for our veterans. This has to be a national mission. As a nation, we should not be satisfied—will not be satisfied—until every man and woman in uniform, every veteran, gets the help that they need to stay strong and healthy.

And this law will not bring Clay back, as much as we wish it would. But the reforms that it puts in place would have helped. And they'll help others who are going through the same challenging process that he went through. So this is a good day, and we pay tribute to everyone who helped to make it possible.

We want to thank Clay's family, especially his mom and stepfather, Susan and Richard Selke; his father and stepmother, Stacy and Dianne Hunt. You guys never stopped fighting for Clay, and for all the families who have lost sons and daughters as well. And as a Commander in Chief and as a father, I can't think of a more beautiful and special way to honor your son. So we thank you very much.

We want to thank Jake and all those who served with Clay, who protected him and loved him like a brother, and all the veterans service organizations that fought for this law and who advocated so passionately for those who have served. We thank all the military families who have lost a loved one, families here today who channeled their grief into helping others. They believe, as we all do, that we have to end this tragedy of suicide among our troops and veterans.

I want to thank the Members of Congress, Republican and Democrat, who worked to get this done. I want to give a special acknowledgement to somebody who knows a little bit about service, Senator John McCain. Dick Blumenthal, we're grateful for your efforts. Representative Jeff Miller. My homegirl from the Chicago area—[*laughter*]—Tammy Duckworth. Couldn't be prouder of her. And, Tim Walsh—Tim Walz, thank you so much for the great work.

And just to be clear about the bipartisanship here, this is one of those areas where we can't have an argument. Clay's parents are Texas Republicans. [*Laughter*] I mean, that's just not run-of-the-mill Republican. [*Laughter*] And they worked with this entire spectrum: conservatives, liberals. And that's just a reminder of what we can accomplish when we take a break from the partisan bickering that so often dominates this town and focus on what really matters to the American people.

I wish I had gotten a chance to know Clay. But in a way, I feel that I do, because there are a lot of incredible men and women all across this country who, like Clay, just love their country and want to serve. Michelle and I have had a chance to meet so many of them, and it's such an incredible privilege.

I think of the soldiers I sat down with at Fort Bliss a few years ago, and they told me they were proud to serve, but struggled with challenges like posttraumatic stress. They told me about the challenges they had in getting support and treatment and managing their medications, staying strong for their families and their fellow soldiers, and most of all, the challenge of asking for help, which is hard to do for folks who are used to helping others.

I think of Staff Sergeant Ty Carter, whom I awarded the Medal of Honor. He survived an unimaginable battle in Afghanistan and carried a badly wounded comrade to safety. As tough as they come. But he too acknowledged before the ceremony—and talked about it publicly—his struggles with posttraumatic stress. At first, he resisted even seeking help, but eventually, he reached out for the care that he needed. Today, he is transitioning to civilian life. He's started his own business, and he travels across the country as an advocate, helping veterans and other Americans turn their struggles into a source of strength.

I think of the college student who recently wrote me a letter on Christmas Day. This is as tough a letter as I've received since I've been President. She talked about her father, who's a retired marine, and told me about how her dad used to love to hunt and fish and spend time with her and her little brother. But gripped with posttraumatic stress, he became less and less like himself and withdrew from the family. And yet, despite these struggles, she wrote: "I knew that my dad was still in there somewhere. . . . He is still my father. And I am still his little girl." And she was writing, she said, to ask for help—help her father find his way back—"not for my family, Mr. President," she said. "I'm asking you to help the others," other families like hers. And she said, "Don't forget about them."

And that's really what today is about: Don't forget. So today we say again, to every person in uniform, every veteran who has ever served: We thank you for your service. We honor your sacrifice. But sometimes, talk is cheap. And sometimes—particularly at a time when we've got an All-Volunteer Force and so often we can celebrate them at a ball game, but too many are insulated from the impacts—we've got to also act. We can't just talk.

So we're ready to help you begin the next chapter of your lives. And if you are hurting, know this: You are not forgotten. You are not alone. You are never alone. We are here for you. America is here for you, all of us. And we will not stop doing everything in our power to get you the care and support you need to stay strong and keep serving this country we love. We need you. We need you. You make our country better.

So I thank all of you. God bless our troops, our veterans, our military families. God bless the United States of America.

And with that, I want Michelle to—and Clay's family and our other guests to join us on stage so I can sign the Clay Hunt SAV Act into law.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:08 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Jacob Wood, cofounder and executive director, Team Rubicon; Bill and Muriel Knotts, grandparents of Clay W. Hunt; and Jill T. Biden, wife of Vice President Joe Biden. H.R. 203, approved February 12, was assigned Public Law No. 114–2.

Statement on Senate Confirmation of Ashton B. Carter as Secretary of Defense
February 12, 2015

Ash Carter served as a key leader of our national security team in the first years of my Presidency, and with his overwhelming bipartisan confirmation by the Senate today, I'm proud to welcome him back as our next Secretary of Defense. With his decades of experience, Ash will help keep our military strong as we continue the fight against terrorist networks, modernize our alliances, and invest in new capabilities to keep our Armed Forces prepared for long-term threats.

As Secretary of Defense, Ash will play a central role in our work with Congress to find a more responsible approach to defense spending that makes the Department more efficient, preserves military readiness, and keeps faith with our men and women in uniform and their families. We have the strongest military in history of the world, and with Secretary Carter at the Pentagon and our troops serving bravely around the world, we're going to keep it that way.

Statement on the Resignation of Ronald A. Klain as White House Ebola Response Coordinator
February 12, 2015

When I asked Ron Klain last fall to become the administration's Ebola Response Coordinator, the apprehension and even fear of Ebola in the United States was at its peak. Likewise, there was more than a little skepticism from some corners at the selection of Ron to fulfill this function. But, the background noise notwithstanding, I chose Ron for a reason: I have known him to be nothing less than an effective, dedicated, and tireless manager and leader. And those traits have been on full display since October, as Ron has helped marshal our whole-of-government approach to tackle Ebola at the source in West Africa and to fortify our preparedness here at home. The results of that effort speak for themselves, so much so that we can now turn our focus to our ultimate goal of getting to zero cases in West Africa, which might have seemed unthinkable last fall.

As Ron finishes his tenure and returns to private life, I extend my gratitude for his service. He took on a challenge that many called insurmountable and, in leading the team responsible for the tremendous progress, helped remind the world what makes America so exceptional.

Remarks on Signing an Executive Order on Promoting Private Sector Cybersecurity Information Sharing in Stanford, California
February 13, 2015

The President. Hello, Stanford! Thank you so much. Thank you. Thank you so much. Thank you, everybody. Have a seat, have a seat.

Audience member. Yes, we can!

The President. Yes, we can! [*Laughter*]

First of all, let me thank President Hennessy for not just the introduction, but for your outstanding leadership at one of the great universities of the world. I've got to admit, like, I kind of want to go here. [*Laughter*] I was trying to figure out why it is that a really nice place like this is wasted on young people—[*laughter*]—who don't fully appreciate what you've got. It's really nice. And everybody here is so friendly and smart, and it's beautiful. And what's there not to like?

I want to thank you and everyone at Stanford for hosting this summit, especially Amy

Zegart, George Triantis, and someone who served as a great adviser to me at the White House and as an outstanding Ambassador to Russia before coming back to the "Farm," Mike McFaul.

It is great to be here at Leland Stanford Junior University. And I'm pleased to be joined by members of my team who bleed Cardinal red. We're infiltrated with Stanford people. We've got Senior Adviser Valerie Jarrett, National Security Adviser Susan Rice, Secretary of Commerce Penny Pritzker. And let's face it, I like Stanford grads. I noticed Steve Chu was around here, who helped lead our Energy Department for a while. And he's not a—he's now hanging out. I'm also pleased to be joined by other members of my Cabinet: Our Secretary of Homeland Security, Jeh Johnson, is here, and our Small Business Administrator, Maria Contreras-Sweet. And I want to acknowledge my tireless Homeland Security Adviser, who helped, and continues to shape, our cybersecurity efforts, Lisa Monaco. Thank you, Lisa.

So I'd always heard about this campus, and everybody is riding bikes and people hopping into fountains—[*laughter*]—and the current holder of the Axe. This is the place that made "nerd" cool. [*Laughter*] I was thinking about wearing some black-rimmed glasses, some tape in the middle, but I guess that's not what you do anymore. Ambassador McFaul told me if I came to Stanford, you'd "talk nerdy to me." [*Laughter*]

But I'm not just here to enjoy myself. As we gather here today, America is seeing incredible progress that we can all be proud of. We just had the best year of job growth since the 1990s. Over the past 59 months, our businesses have created nearly 12 million new jobs, which is the longest streak of private sector job growth on record. And in a hopeful sign for middle class families, wages are beginning to rise again.

And meanwhile, we're doing more to prepare our young people for a competitive world. Our high school graduation rate has hit an all-time high, and more Americans are finishing college than ever before. Here at Stanford and across the country, we've got the best universities, we've got the best scientists, the best researchers, in the world. We've got the most dynamic economy in the world. And no place represents that better than this region. So make no mistake: More than any other nation on Earth, the United States is positioned to lead in the 21st century.

And so much of our economic competitiveness is tied to what brings me here today, and that is America's leadership in the digital economy. It's our ability—almost unique across the planet—our ability to innovate and to learn and to discover and to create and build and do business online and stretch the boundaries of what's possible. That's what drives us. And so when we had to decide where to have this summit, the decision was easy, because so much of our Information Age began right here, at Stanford.

It was here where two students, Bill Hewlett and Dave Packard, met and then, in a garage not far from here, started a company that eventually built one of the first personal computers, weighing in at 40 pounds. [*Laughter*] It was from here, in 1968, where a researcher, Douglas Englebart, astonished an audience with two computers, connected "online," and hypertext you could click on with something called a "mouse."

A year later, a computer here received the first message from another computer 350 miles away, the beginnings of what would eventually become the Internet. And by the way, it's no secret that many of these innovations built on Government-funded research is one of the reasons that if we want to maintain our economic leadership in the world, America has to keep investing in basic research in science and technology. It's absolutely critical.

So here at Stanford, pioneers developed the protocols and architecture of the Internet, DSL, the first webpage in America, innovations for cloud computing. Student projects here became Yahoo and Google. Those were pretty good student projects. [*Laughter*] Your graduates have gone on to help create and build thousands of companies that have shaped our digital society, from Cisco to Sun Microsystems, YouTube to Instagram, StubHub, Bonobos. According to one study, if all the

companies traced back to Stanford graduates formed their own nation, you'd be one the largest economies in the world and have a pretty good football team as well. So—[*laughter*].

And today, with your cutting-edge research programs and your new cyber initiatives, you're helping us navigate some of the most complicated cyber challenges that we face as a nation. And that's why we're here. I want to thank all of you who have joined us today: Members of Congress, representatives from the private sector, government, academia, privacy and consumer groups, and especially the students who are here. Now, just as we're all connected like never before, we have to work together like never before, both to seize opportunities, but also meet the challenges of this Information Age.

And it's one of the great paradoxes of our time that the very technologies that empower us to do great good can also be used to undermine us and inflict great harm. The same information technologies that help make our military the most advanced in the world are targeted by hackers from China and Russia who go after our defense contractors and systems that are built for our troops. The same social media we use in Government to advocate for democracy and human rights around the world can also be used by terrorists to spread hateful ideologies. So these cyber threats are a challenge to our national security.

Much of our critical infrastructure—our financial systems, our power grid, health systems—run on networks connected to the Internet, which is hugely empowering, but also dangerous and creates new points of vulnerability that we didn't have before. Foreign governments and criminals are probing these systems every single day. We only have to think of real-life examples—an air traffic control system going down and disrupting flights or blackouts that plunge cities into darkness—to imagine what a set of systematic cyber attacks might do. So this is also a matter of public safety.

As a nation, we do more business online than ever before: trillions of dollars a year. And high-tech industries, like those across the Valley, support millions of American jobs. All this gives us an enormous competitive advantage in the global economy. And for that very reason, American companies are being targeted, their trade secrets stolen, intellectual property ripped off. The North Korean cyber attack on Sony Pictures destroyed data and disabled thousands of computers and exposed the personal information of Sony employees. And these attacks are hurting American companies and costing American jobs. So this is also a threat to America's economic security.

As consumers, we do more online than ever before. We manage our bank accounts. We shop. We pay our bills. We handle our medical records. And as a country, one of our greatest resources are the young people who are here today, digitally fearless and unencumbered by convention and uninterested in old debates. And they're remaking the world every day. But it also means that this problem of how we secure this digital world is only going to increase.

I want more Americans succeeding in our digital world. I want young people like you to unleash the next waves of innovation and launch the next startups and give Americans the tools to create new jobs and new businesses and to expand connectivity in places that we currently can't imagine, to help open up new worlds and new experiences and empower individuals in ways that would seem unimaginable 10, 15, 20 years ago.

And that's why we're working to connect 99 percent of America's students to high-speed Internet, because when it comes to educating our children, we can't afford any digital divides. And it's why we're helping more communities get across to the next generation of broadband faster, with cheaper Internet, so that students and entrepreneurs and small businesses across America, not just in pockets of America, have the same opportunities to learn and compete as you do here in the Valley. It's why I've come out so strongly and publicly for net neutrality, for an open and free Internet, because we have to preserve one of the greatest engines for creativity and innovation in human history.

So our connectivity brings extraordinary benefits to our daily lives, but it also brings

risks. And when companies get hacked, Americans' personal information, including their financial information, gets stolen. Identity theft can ruin your credit rating and turn your life upside down. In recent breaches, more than a hundred million Americans had their personal data compromised, including, in some cases, credit card information. We want our children to go online and explore the world, but we also want them to be safe and not have their privacy violated. So this is a direct threat to the economic security of American families, not just the economy overall, and to the well-being of our children, which means, we've got to put in place mechanisms to protect them.

So shortly after I took office, before I had gray hair—[*laughter*]—I said that these cyber threats were one of the most serious economic national security challenges that we face as a nation, and I made confronting them a priority. And given the complexity of these threats, I believe we have to be guided by some basic principles. So let me share those with you today.

First, this has to be a shared mission. So much of our computer networks and critical infrastructure are in the private sector, which means government cannot do this alone. But the fact is that the private sector can't do it alone either, because it's government that often has the latest information on new threats. There's only one way to defend America from these cyber threats, and that is through government and industry working together, sharing appropriate information as true partners.

Second, we have to focus on our unique strengths. Government has many capabilities, but it's not appropriate or even possible for government to secure the computer networks of private businesses. Many of the companies who are here today are cutting edge, but the private sector doesn't always have the capabilities needed during a cyber attack: the situational awareness or the ability to warn other companies in real time or the capacity to coordinate a response across companies and sectors. So we're going to have to be smart and efficient and focus on what each sector does best and then do it together.

Third, we're going to have to constantly evolve. The first computer viruses hit personal computers in the early 1980s, and essentially, we've been in a cyber arms race ever since. We design new defenses, and then hackers and criminals design new ways to penetrate them. Whether it's phishing or botnets, spyware or malware, and now ransomware, these attacks are getting more and more sophisticated every day. So we've got to be just as fast and flexible and nimble in constantly evolving our defenses.

And fourth, and most importantly, in all our work we have to make sure we are protecting the privacy and civil liberty of the American people. And we grapple with these issues in government. We've pursued important reforms to make sure we are respecting peoples' privacy as well as ensuring our national security. And the private sector wrestles with this as well. When consumers share their personal information with companies, they deserve to know that it's going to be protected. When government and industry share information about cyber threats, we've got to do so in a way that safeguards your personal information. When people go online, we shouldn't have to forfeit the basic privacy that we're entitled to as Americans.

In recent years, we've worked to put these principles into practice. And as part of our comprehensive strategy, we've boosted our defenses in government, we're sharing more information with the private sector to help those companies defend themselves, we're working with industry to use what we call a cybersecurity framework to prevent, respond to, and recover from attacks when they happen.

And by the way, I recently went to the National Cybersecurity Communications Integration Center, which is part of the Department of Homeland Security, where representatives from government and the private sector monitor cyber threats 24/7. And so defending against cyber threats, just like terrorism or other threats, is one more reason that we are calling on Congress not to engage in politics—this is not a Republican or a Democratic issue—but work to make sure that our security is safeguarded and that we fully fund the Depart-

ment of Homeland Security, because it has great responsibilities in this area.

So we're making progress, and I've recently announced new actions to keep up this momentum. Now, we've called for a single national standard so Americans know within 30 days if your information has been stolen. This month, we'll be proposing legislation that we call a Consumer Privacy Bill of Rights to give Americans some baseline protections, like the right to decide what personal data companies collect from you, and the right to know how companies are using that information. We've proposed the Student Digital Privacy Act, which is modeled on the landmark law here in California, because today's amazing educational technologies should be used to teach our students and not collect data for marketing to students.

And we've also taken new steps to strengthen our cybersecurity, proposing new legislation to promote greater information sharing between government and the private sector, including liability protections for companies that share information about cyber threats. Now, today I'm once again calling on Congress to come together and get this done.

And this week, we announced the creation of our new Cyber Threat Intelligence Integration Center. Just like we do with terrorist threats, we're going to have a single entity that's analyzing and integrating and quickly sharing intelligence about cyber threats across Government so we can act on all those threats even faster.

And today we're taking an additional step—which is why there's a desk here. You were wondering, I'm sure. [*Laughter*] I'm signing a new Executive order to promote even more information sharing about cyber threats, both within the private sector and between government and the private sector. And it will encourage more companies and industries to set up organizations—hubs—so you can share information with each other. It will call for a common set of standards, including protections for privacy and civil liberties, so that government can share threat information with these hubs more easily. And it can help make it easier for companies to get the classified cybersecurity threat information that they need to protect their companies.

I want to acknowledge, by the way, that the companies who are represented here are stepping up as well. The Cyber Threat Alliance, which includes companies like Palo Alto Networks and Symantec, are going to work with us to share more information under this new Executive order. You've got companies from Apple to Intel, from Bank of America to PG&E, who are going to use the cybersecurity framework to strengthen their own defenses. As part of our BuySecure initiative, Visa and MasterCard and American Express and others are going to make their transactions more secure. Nationstar is joining companies that are giving their companies [customers]* another weapon to battle identity theft, and that's free access to their credit scores.

And more companies are moving to new, stronger technologies to authenticate user identities, like biometrics, because it's just too easy for hackers to figure out usernames and passwords, like "password." [*Laughter*] Or "12345"—[*laughter*]—"7." [*Laughter*] Those are some of my previous passwords. [*Laughter*] I've changed them since then.

So this summit is an example of what we need more of: all of us working together to do what none of us can achieve alone. And it is difficult. Some of the challenges I've described today have defied solutions for years. And I want to say very clearly that, as somebody who is a former constitutional law teacher and somebody who deeply values his privacy and his family's privacy—although, I chose the wrong job for that—[*laughter*]—but will be a private citizen again and cares deeply about this, I have to tell you that grappling with how government protects the American people from adverse events while, at the same time, making sure that government itself is not abusing its capabilities is hard.

* White House correction.

The cyber world is sort of the wild, wild West. And to some degree, we're asked to be the sheriff. When something like Sony happens, people want to know what can government do about this. If information is being shared by terrorists in the cyber world and an attack happens, people want to know are there ways of stopping that from happening. By necessity, that means government has its own significant capabilities in the cyber world. But then people, rightly, ask, well, what safeguards do we have against government intruding on our own privacy? And it's hard, and it constantly evolves because the technology so often outstrips whatever rules and structures and standards have been put in place, which means that government has to be constantly self-critical and we have to be able to have an open debate about it.

But we're all here today because we know that we're going to have to break through some of these barriers that are holding us back if we are going to continue to thrive in this remarkable new world. We all know what we need to do. We have to build stronger defenses and disrupt more attacks. We have to make cyberspace safer. We have to improve cooperation across the board. And by the way, this is not just here in America, but internationally, which also, by the way, makes things complicated because a lot of countries don't necessarily share our investments—or our commitment to openness, and we have to try to navigate that.

But this should not be an ideological issue. And that's one thing I want to emphasize: This is not a Democratic issue or a Republican issue. This is not a liberal or a conservative issue. Everybody is online, and everybody is vulnerable. The business leaders here want their privacy and their children protected, just like the consumer and privacy advocates here want America to keep leading the world in technology and be safe from attacks. So I'm hopeful that through this forum and the work that we do subsequently, that we're able to generate ideas and best practices and that the work of this summit can help guide our planning and execution for years to come.

After all, we are just getting started. Think about it. Tim Berners-Lee, from his lab in Switzerland, invented the World Wide Web in 1989, which was only 26 years ago. The great epochs in human history—the Bronze Age, Iron Age, Agricultural Revolution, Industrial Revolution—they spanned centuries. We're only 26 years into this Internet Age. We've only scratched the surface. And as I guess they say at Google, "The future is awesome." [*Laughter*] We haven't even begun to imagine the discoveries and innovations that are going to be unleashed in the decades to come. But we know how we'll get there.

Reflecting on his work in the 1960s on ARPANET, the precursor of the Internet, the late Paul Baran said this: "The process of technological developments is like building a cathedral. Over the course of several hundred years, new people come along and each lays down a block on top of the old foundations, each saying, 'I built the cathedral.' And then comes along an historian who asks, 'Well, who built the cathedral?'" And Baran said: "If you're not careful, you can con yourself into believing that you did the most important part. But the reality is that each contribution has to follow on to previous work. Everything is tied to everything else."

Everything is tied to everything else. The innovations that first appeared on this campus all those decades ago—that first mouse, that first message—helped lay a foundation. And in the decades since, on campuses like this, in companies like those that are represented here, new people have come along, each laying down a block, one on top of the other. And when future historians ask who built this Information Age, it won't be any one of us who did the most important part alone. The answer will be, "We all did, as Americans."

And I'm absolutely confident that if we keep at this, if we keep working together in a spirit of collaboration, like all those innovators before us, our work will endure, like a great cathedral, for centuries to come. And that cathedral will not just be about technology, it will be about the values that we've embedded in the architecture of this system. It will be about pri-

vacy, and it will be about community. And it will be about connection. What a magnificent cathedral that all of you have helped to build. We want to be a part of that, and we look forward to working with you in the future.

Thank you for your partnership. With that, I'm going to sign this Executive order. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:33 a.m. at the White House Summit on Cybersecurity and Consumer Protection at Stanford University. In his remarks, he referred to Amy Zegart, codirector of the Center for International Security and Cooperation, George Triantis, associate dean for strategic planning and associate dean of research, and Michael A. McFaul, director of the Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies, Stanford University; and Timothy J. Berners-Lee, director, World Wide Web Consortium (W3C). Executive Order 13691 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser in San Francisco, California

February 13, 2015

Thank you, everybody. Well, first of all, let me just say, Sandy and Jeanne are some of my most longstanding stalwart supporters, and I am so grateful to them. They have been with me just about every step of the way, and I'm sure this shows their Illinois good sense—[*laughter*]—but I am truly grateful, and they arranged a spectacular setting for a spectacular event. And I want to thank them both.

I want to thank everybody who helped to cohost this. There are a lot of friends here who've—I've been in your houses too. [*Laughter*] And you've known me before I had any gray hair—[*laughter*]—and before a lot of people could pronounce my name properly, and I'm grateful. And for those of you who I'm meeting for the first time, thank you so much for being here.

I'm going to—the way I usually do these is to make some very brief remarks on the front end, and then really, I want to spend most of the time just in a conversation and answering questions or hearing ideas that you may have. If you look at what happened last year—and I talked about this in the State of the Union—after a debilitating recession, worst financial crisis since the Great Depression, 4 or 5 hard years of rebuilding and retooling and recovery, last year ended up being really a breakout year for America, in which all that hard work began to show itself not just in the fact that we had the fastest drop in unemployment in 30 years, not only in the fastest job growth since the 1990s, not only in strong GDP growth, export growth, but also a whole series of structural changes that we had begun way back in 2009 that were beginning to really bear fruit.

Doubling the production of clean energy. Ten times more solar power than we had. Three times more wind power than we had. Cutting carbon emissions. High school graduation rates at an alltime high. For younger students, reading and math scores showing appreciable gains. Highest college enrollment that we had seen in a very long time.

All these issues that had affected a lot of people for a long time finally began to pay off. And obviously, one of the most striking examples was health care, where despite all the battles back and forth in Washington, after a year we've seen more than 10 million people have affordable health insurance, high-quality health insurance for the first time, in some cases, in their lives.

And so the question I posed at the State of the Union was, how do we sustain this momentum and drive it in such a way that the overall growth that we're seeing, the aggregate GDP numbers, the improved stock market—that all of that begins to now manifest itself in hard-working families feeling a little bit more secure, feeling a little bit more hopeful, seeing more ladders of opportunity for young people? How do we make sure that our prosperity is

broad based? How do we make sure that incomes and wages start going up for folks? How do we make sure that a young family is able to manage childcare costs and save for college and save for retirement? And if somebody gets sick, are they able to stay home, or if their child is sick, without losing a day's pay? How do we make sure that minimum-wage workers are getting paid enough that they're not in poverty if they're working full time? How do we build on the progress that we've made around clean energy to actually tackle the global challenge of climate change and do it in a way that produces jobs and spurs on economic development? How do we keep ourselves safe while still being true to our values?

And the good news is, is that we actually have pretty good answers for all of these challenges. They're not easy. In some cases, it requires sacrifice. In some cases, it requires investments today that will pay off 10 years from now or 20 years from now or 50 years from now. But we know what to do, and the question is, is our politics up to the task? And that's where all of you come in.

We had a very challenging midterm, despite good news, in part because two-thirds almost of eligible voters didn't vote. And part of the challenge is that people have felt so cynical about government for so long and the gridlock in Washington has been so fierce, that at a certain point, people just opt out.

And one of the things I am absolutely determined to do over the next 2 years is not just consolidate the gains that we've made, not just move forward on new initiatives like free community colleges for young people around the country who need to be trained for the 21st-century economy, but part of my goal is also to restore a sense of possibility in our politics and our government. And in some cases, that means challenging folks who are practicing the worst kind of cynical politics and a politics based on fear rather than hope. In some cases, it's going to be finding areas of cooperating with Republicans. In either case, we're going to need people like you to support these ongoing efforts.

I've only got 2 years left, but 2 years is a long time. And 2 years is also the time in which we're going to be setting the stage for the next Presidential election and the next 10 years of American policy. And so I intend to run through the tape and work really hard and squeeze every last little bit of change and improvement in the lives of ordinary Americans and middle class families that I can. But I can't do it alone. And that's why your support for the DNC is so greatly appreciated. And for those of you who have been there every step of the way, I just want to say thank you.

Thanks, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:30 p.m. at the residence of Sanford and Jeanne Robertson. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement on the Deaths of Yusor Mohammad Abu-Salha, Deah Shaddy Barakat, and Razan Mohammad Abu-Salha
February 13, 2015

Yesterday the FBI opened an inquiry into the brutal and outrageous murders of Yusor Mohammad Abu-Salha, Deah Shaddy Barakat, and Razan Mohammad Abu-Salha in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. In addition to the ongoing investigation by local authorities, the FBI is taking steps to determine whether Federal laws were violated. No one in the United States of America should ever be targeted because of who they are, what they look like, or how they worship. Michelle and I offer our condolences to the victims' loved ones. As we saw with the overwhelming presence at the funeral of these young Americans, we are all one American family. Whenever anyone is taken from us before their time, we remember how they lived their lives. And the words of one of the victims should inspire the way we live ours.

"Growing up in America has been such a blessing," Yusor said recently. "It doesn't matter where you come from. There's so many different people from so many different places, of different backgrounds and religions—but here, we're all one."

Joint Statement by Group of Seven Leaders on the Situation in Ukraine
February 13, 2015

We, the leaders of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, the United States, the President of the European Council and the President of the European Commission welcome the "Package of Measures for the Implementation of the Minsk Agreements" adopted by their original signatories on 12th February 2015 in Minsk. Implementation of the "Minsk Package" offers a way forward to a comprehensive, sustainable, and peaceful resolution to the crisis in eastern Ukraine.

However, the G7 remains concerned about the situation in Ukraine, in particular in view of the fighting around Debaltseve where Russian-backed separatist militias are operating beyond the line of contact agreed upon in the Minsk agreements of September 2014, causing numerous civilian casualties. We urge all sides to adhere strictly to the provisions of the Package and to carry out its measures without delay, starting with a ceasefire on the 15th of February. All parties should refrain from actions in the coming days that would hinder the start of the ceasefire. The G7 stands ready to adopt appropriate measures against those who violate the "Minsk package" and therefore intensify the costs for them, in particular against those who do not observe the agreed comprehensive ceasefire and withdrawal of heavy weapons.

We again condemn Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea which is in violation of international law.

The G7 welcomes the agreement in principle reached on the 12th of February by the IMF and the government of Ukraine on a new economic reform program that will be supported by an IMF Extended Fund Facility. The G7 members look forward to prompt consideration of the program by the IMF Executive Board. We are providing financial assistance to support Ukraine. This international assistance will help Ukraine in the ambitious economic reforms it is undertaking to restore economic growth and improve the living standards of the Ukrainian people. We commend the government of Ukraine for its commitment to implement this ambitious reform agenda with regard to economic, rule-of-law, and democratic reforms.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

The President's Weekly Address
February 14, 2015

Hi, everybody. In my State of the Union Address, I laid out my ideas to help working families feel more secure and earn the skills required to advance in a world of constant change. And in a new economy that's increasingly built on knowledge and innovation, a core element of this middle class economics is how we prepare our kids for the future.

For decades, we threw money at education without making sure our schools were actually improving or whether we were giving teachers the tools they need or whether our taxpayer dollars were being used effectively. And our kids too often paid the price.

Now, over the past few years, we've seen signs that our elementary and secondary school students are doing better. Last year, our younger students earned the highest math and reading scores on record. Last week, we learned that our high school

graduation rate hit a new alltime high. So this is progress.

But in a 21st-century economy, our kids will only do better than we did if we educate them better than we were educated. So we have to do more to make sure they graduate from school fully prepared for college and a career.

This year, I want to work with both parties in Congress to replace No Child Left Behind with a smarter law that addresses the overuse of standardized tests, makes a real investment in preschool, and gives every kid a fair shot in the new economy.

Now, it's pretty commonsense that an education bill should actually improve education. But as we speak, there's a Republican bill in Congress that frankly would do the opposite.

At a time when we should invest more in our kids, their plan would lock in cuts to schools for the rest of this decade. We'd end up actually investing less in our kids in 2021 than we did in 2012. At a time when we should give our teachers all the resources they need, their plan could let States and cities shuffle education dollars into things like sports stadiums or tax cuts for the wealthy. At a time when we have to give every child, everywhere, a fair shot, this Congress would actually allow States to make even deeper cuts into school districts that need the most support, send even more money to some of the wealthiest school districts in America, and turn back the clock to a time when too many students were left behind in failing schools.

Denying a quality education to the children of working families is as wrong as denying health care or childcare to working families. We are better than this.

I have a different vision for the middle class. In today's world, we have to equip all our kids with an education that prepares them for success, regardless of what they look like or how much their parents make or the ZIP Code that they live in.

And that means trying new things, investing in what's working, and fixing what's not. That means cutting testing down to the bare minimum required to make sure parents and teachers know how our kids and schools are doing from year to year and relative to schools statewide. That means giving the teachers and principals who do the hard work every day the resources they need to spend less time teaching to a test and more time teaching our kids the skills they need.

Some of these changes are hard. They'll require all of us to demand more of our schools and more of our kids, making sure they put down the video games and iPhones and pick up the books. They'll require us to demand that Washington treat education reform as the dedicated progress of decades, something a town with a short attention span doesn't always do very well.

But I'm confident we can do this. When it comes to education, we are not a collection of States competing against one another, we're a single nation competing against the world. Nothing will determine our success as a nation in the 21st century more than how well we educate our kids. And we shouldn't accept anything less than the best.

So thanks, everybody. And before I go, happy Valentine's Day, Michelle.

Have a great weekend, everybody.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 11:55 a.m. on February 13 in Room 129 of Memorial Hall at Stanford University in Stanford, CA, for broadcast on February 14. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 13, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on February 14.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Secretary of Defense Ashton B. Carter and an Exchange With Reporters
February 17, 2015

The President. Well, I just had an opportunity to meet for the first time in his official capacity with my new Secretary of Defense, Ash Carter, who talked about a wide range of security challenges and opportunities that we face around the world: everything from making sure that we are dismantling ISIL, and not only stabilizing the situation in Iraq, but addressing the foreign fighter issue and countering the narrative of violent extremism that has been turbocharged through the Internet.

We had a chance to talk about situations like Ukraine. We also had an opportunity to talk about how we maintain the strongest and most effective military in the world and how we keep faith with our outstanding men and women in uniform.

I could not be more confident that Ash Carter is going to do an outstanding job as Secretary of Defense. And he is hitting the ground running, having already spent a lot of time in this administration and in the Pentagon.

So I want to thank the Senate for confirming him almost unanimously. And I look forward to working with him in the years to come. I think America will be well served by Mr. Ash Carter. Great.

U.S. District Court Opinion in Texas, et al. v. United States/President's Executive Actions on Immigration/Immigration Reform Legislation

Q. Mr. President, was there——

Q. Immigration?

Q. ——on the immigration issue today?

The President. I disagree with the Texas judge's ruling, and the Justice Department will appeal. This is not the first time where a lower court judge has blocked something or attempted to block something that ultimately was shown to be lawful. And I'm confident that it is well within my authority and the tradition of the executive branch's prosecutorial discretion to execute this policy, which will help us make our borders safer, will help us go after criminals and those that we don't want in this country, will help people get on the right side of the law and get out of the shadows.

And keep in mind that this is something that we necessarily have to make choices about because we've got 11 million people here who we're not all going to deport. Many of them are our neighbors. Many of them are working in our communities. Many of their children are U.S. citizens. And as we saw with the executive action that I took for DREAMers—people who have come here as young children and are American by any other name except for their legal papers, who want to serve this country, oftentimes want to go into the military or start businesses or in other ways contribute—I think the American people overwhelmingly recognize that to pretend like we are going to ship them off is unrealistic and not who we are.

So I've also said throughout this process that the only way we're going to get a broken immigration system fully fixed is by Congress acting. And we know that there has been bipartisan support in the past for comprehensive immigration reform. I held off taking these executive actions until we had exhausted all possibilities of getting congressional action done. With a new Congress, my hope has been that they now get serious in solving the problem. Instead, what we've had is a series of votes to kick out young people who have grown up here and everybody recognizes are part of our community and threats to defund the Department of Homeland Security, which would make it even harder for us to protect our borders and to keep our people safe.

So my strong advice right now to Congress is, if they are seriously concerned about immigration, about our borders, about being able to keep criminals out of this country, then what they should be doing is working together and working with this administration for a comprehensive immigration policy that allows us to continue to be both a nation of laws and a nation of immigrants. And certainly they need to

start funding the Department of Homeland Security so that they can go forward with all the functions that Republicans say they want carried out, including strong border security functions.

But with respect to the ruling, we—I disagree with it. I think the law is on our side and history is on our side. And we are going to appeal it. For those who are now wondering whether or not they should apply, we are going to refer those questions to the Department of Homeland Security that's already begun the planning process. And we will be prepared to implement this fully as soon as the legal issues get resolved.

Q. Why not wait until the higher court rules on your programs before implementing them?

The President. Well, keep in mind, we're not going to disregard this Federal court ruling. The law is the law in this country, and we take things a step at a time. So we're not going to be actually taking applications in until this case is settled. But we are doing the preparatory work because this is a big piece of business and it's important for us to do in order for us to actually secure our borders effectively and allocate limited resources to the most important tasks and functions that the Department of Homeland Security has.

We should not be tearing some mom away from her child when the child has been born here and that mom has been living here for the last 10 years, minding her own business and being a important part of the community. We should be focusing on stopping people at the borders, reinforcing our effectiveness there, going after criminals and felons who are in our midst who we can deport, strengthening our systems for legal immigration. Those are all the things that we could be doing through a comprehensive immigration reform bill, and in fact, we know that there has been in the past bipartisan support for that.

But as I said before, I'm not willing to just stand by and do nothing and engage in a lot of political rhetoric. I'm interested in actually solving problems. I'd like to see Congress take that same approach.

In the meantime, the Department of Homeland Security will continue with the planning because we want to make sure as soon as these legal issues get resolved, which I anticipate they will in our favor, that we are ready to go. Okay?

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:32 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Andrew S. Hanen, judge, U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Texas. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

Remarks at the White House Summit on Countering Violent Extremism
February 18, 2015

Thank you. Thank you so much. Everybody, please have a seat.

Well, thank you, Lisa, for the introduction. Lisa is an example of the countless dedicated public servants across our Government, a number of who are here today, who are working tirelessly every single day on behalf of the security and safety of the American people. So we very much appreciate her. And thanks to all of you for your attendance and participation in this important summit.

For more than 238 years, the United States of America has not just endured, but we have thrived and surmounted challenges that might have broken a lesser nation. After a terrible Civil War, we repaired our Union. We weathered a Great Depression, became the world's most dynamic economy. We fought fascism, liberated Europe. We faced down communism and won. American communities have been destroyed by earthquakes and tornadoes and fires and floods, and each time we rebuild.

The bombing that killed 168 people could not break Oklahoma City. On 9/11, terrorists tried to bring us to our knees; today a new tower soars above New York City, and America continues to lead throughout the world. After Americans were killed at Fort Hood and the

Boston Marathon, it didn't divide us; we came together as one American family.

In the face of horrific acts of violence—at a Sikh temple near Milwaukee or at a Jewish community center outside Kansas City—we reaffirmed our commitment to pluralism and to freedom, repulsed by the notion that anyone should ever be targeted because of who they are or what they look like or how they worship.

Most recently, with the brutal murders in Chapel Hill of three young Muslim Americans, many Muslim Americans are worried and afraid. And I want to be as clear as I can be: As Americans, all faiths and backgrounds, we stand with you in your grief and we offer our love and we offer our support.

My point is this: As Americans, we are strong and we are resilient. And when tragedy strikes, when we take a hit, we pull together, and we draw on what's best in our character: our optimism, our commitment to each other, our commitment to our values, our respect for one another. We stand up, and we rebuild, and we recover, and we emerge stronger than before. That's who we are.

And I say all this because we face genuine challenges to our security today, just as we have throughout our history. Challenges to our security are not new. They didn't happen yesterday or a week ago or a year ago. We've always faced challenges. And one of those challenges is the terrorist threat from groups like Al Qaida and ISIL. But this isn't our challenge alone. It's a challenge for the world. ISIL is terrorizing the people of Syria and Iraq, beheads and burns human beings in unfathomable acts of cruelty. We've seen deadly attacks in Ottawa and Sydney and Paris and now Copenhagen.

And so, in the face of this challenge, we have marshalled the full force of the United States Government, and we're working with allies and partners to dismantle terrorist organizations and protect the American people. Given the complexities of the challenge and the nature of the enemy—which is not a traditional army—this work takes time and will require vigilance and resilience and perspective. But I'm confident that, just as we have for more than two centuries, we will ultimately prevail.

And part of what gives me that confidence is the overwhelming response of the world community to the savagery of these terrorists, not just revulsion, but a concrete commitment to work together to vanquish these organizations.

At the United Nations in September, I called on the international community to come together and eradicate this scourge of violent extremism. And I want to thank all of you—from across America and around the world—for answering this call. Tomorrow at the State Department, governments and civil society groups from more than 60 countries will focus on the steps that we can take as governments. And I'll also speak about how our nations have to remain relentless in our fight—our counterterrorism efforts—against groups that are plotting against our counties.

But we are here today because of a very specific challenge, and that's countering violent extremism, something that is not just a matter of military affairs. By "violent extremism," we don't just mean the terrorists who are killing innocent people. We also mean the ideologies, the infrastructure of extremists—the propagandists, the recruiters, the funders—who radicalize and recruit or incite people to violence. We all know there is no one profile of a violent extremist or terrorist, so there's no way to predict who will become radicalized. Around the world and here in the United States, inexcusable acts of violence have been committed against people of different faiths, by people of different faiths, which is, of course, a betrayal of all our faiths. It's not unique to one group or to one geography or one period of time.

But we are here at this summit because of the urgent threat from groups like Al Qaida and ISIL. And this week, we are focused on prevention: preventing these groups from radicalizing, recruiting, or inspiring others to violence in the first place. I've called upon governments to come to the United Nations this fall with concrete steps that we can take together. And today, what I want to do is suggest several areas where I believe we can concentrate our efforts.

First, we have to confront squarely and honestly the twisted ideologies that these terrorist groups use to incite people to violence. Leading up to this summit, there's been a fair amount of debate in the press and among pundits about the words we use to describe and frame this challenge. So I want to be very clear about how I see it.

Al Qaida and ISIL and groups like it are desperate for legitimacy. They try to portray themselves as religious leaders, holy warriors in defense of Islam. That's why ISIL presumes to declare itself the "Islamic State." And they propagate the notion that America—and the West generally—is at war with Islam. That's how they recruit. That's how they try to radicalize young people. We must never accept the premise that they put forward, because it is a lie. Nor should we grant these terrorists the religious legitimacy that they seek. They are not religious leaders, they're terrorists. And we are not at war with Islam. We are at war with people who have perverted Islam.

Now, just as those of us outside Muslim communities need to reject the terrorist narrative that the West and Islam are in conflict or modern life and Islam are in conflict, I also believe that Muslim communities have a responsibility as well. Al Qaida and ISIL do draw, selectively, from the Islamic texts. They do depend upon the misperception around the world that they speak in some fashion for people of the Muslim faith, that Islam is somehow inherently violent, that there is some sort of clash of civilizations.

Of course, the terrorists do not speak for over a billion Muslims who reject their hateful ideology. They no more represent Islam than any madman who kills innocents in the name of God represents Christianity or Judaism or Buddhism or Hinduism. No religion is responsible for terrorism. People are responsible for violence and terrorism.

And to their credit, there are respected Muslim clerics and scholars not just here in the United States, but around the world who push back on this twisted interpretation of their faith. They want to make very clear what Islam stands for. And we're joined by some of these leaders today. These religious leaders and scholars preach that Islam calls for peace and for justice and tolerance toward others; that terrorism is prohibited; that the Koran says, whoever kills an innocent, it is as if he has killed all mankind. Those are the voices that represent over a billion people around the world.

But if we are going to effectively isolate terrorists, if we're going to address the challenge of their efforts to recruit our young people, if we're going to lift up the voices of tolerance and pluralism within the Muslim community, then we've got to acknowledge that their job is made harder by a broader narrative that does exist in many Muslim communities around the world that suggests the West is at odds with Islam in some fashion.

The reality, which, again, many Muslim leaders have spoken to, is, is that there's a strain of thought that doesn't embrace ISIL's tactics, doesn't embrace violence, but does buy into the notion that the Muslim world has suffered historic grievances—sometimes, that's accurate—does buy into the belief that so many of the ills in the Middle East flow from a history of colonialism or conspiracy; does buy into the idea that Islam is incompatible with modernity or tolerance or that it's been polluted by Western values.

And so those beliefs exist. In some communities around the world, they are widespread. And so it makes individuals—especially young people who already may be disaffected or alienated—more ripe for radicalization. And so we've got to be able to talk honestly about those issues. We've got to be much more clear about how we're rejecting certain ideas.

So just as leaders like myself reject the notion that terrorists like ISIL genuinely represent Islam, Muslim leaders need to do more to discredit the notion that our nations are determined to suppress Islam, that there's an inherent clash in civilizations. Everybody has to speak up very clearly that no matter what the grievance, violence against innocents doesn't defend Islam or Muslims, it damages Islam and Muslims.

And when all of us, together, are doing our part to reject the narratives of violent extremists, when all of us are doing our part to be very clear about the fact that there are certain universal precepts and values that need to be respected in this interconnected world, that's the beginnings of a partnership.

As we go forward, we need to find new ways to amplify the voices of peace and tolerance and inclusion, and we especially need to do it online. We also need to lift up the voices of those who know the hypocrisy of groups like ISIL firsthand, including former extremists. Their words speak to us today. And I know in some of the discussions, these voices have been raised: "I witnessed horrible crimes committed by ISIS." "It's not a revolution or jihad . . . it's a slaughter . . . I was shocked by what I did." "This isn't what we came for, to kill other Muslims." "I'm 28—is this the only future I'm able to imagine?" That's the voice of so many who were temporarily radicalized and then saw the truth. And they've warned other young people not to make the same mistakes as they did. "Do not run after illusions." "Do not be deceived." "Do not give up your life for nothing." We need to lift up those voices.

And in all this work, the greatest resource are communities themselves, especially like those young people who are here today. We are joined by talented young men and women who are pioneering new innovations and new social media tools and new ways to reach young people. We're joined by leaders from the private sector, including high-tech companies, who want to support your efforts. And I want to challenge all of us to build new partnerships that unleash the talents and creativity of young people—young Muslims—not just to expose the lies of extremists, but to empower youth to service and to lift up people's lives here in America and around the world. And that can be a calling for your generation.

So that's the first challenge: We've got to discredit these ideologies. We have to tackle them head on. And we can't shy away from these discussions. And too often, folks are, understandably, sensitive about addressing some of these root issues, but we have to talk about them, honestly and clearly. Because—and the reason I believe we have to do so is because I'm so confident that when the truth is out, we'll be successful.

Now, a second challenge is, we do have to address the grievances that terrorists exploit, including economic grievances. Poverty alone does not cause a person to become a terrorist, any more than poverty alone causes somebody to become a criminal. There are millions of people—billions of people—in the world who live in abject poverty and are focused on what they can do to build up their own lives and never embrace violent ideologies.

Conversely, there are terrorists who've come from extraordinarily wealthy backgrounds, like Usama bin Laden. What's true, though, is that when millions of people—especially youth—are impoverished and have no hope for the future, when corruption inflicts daily humiliations on people, when there are no outlets by which people can express their concerns, resentments fester. The risk of instability and extremism grow. Where young people have no education, they are more vulnerable to conspiracy theories and radical ideas, because it's not tested against anything else; they've got nothing to weigh. And we've seen this across the Middle East and North Africa.

And terrorist groups are all too happy to step into a void. They offer salaries to their foot soldiers so they can support their families. Sometimes, they offer social services—schools, health clinics—to do what local governments cannot or will not do. They try to justify their violence in the name of fighting the injustice of corruption that steals from the people, even while those terrorist groups end up committing even worse abuses, like kidnapping and human trafficking.

So if we're going to prevent people from being susceptible to the false promises of extremism, then the international community has to offer something better. And the United States intends to do its part. We will keep promoting development and growth that is broadly shared so more people can provide for their families. We'll keep leading a global effort against corruption, because the culture of the bribe has to

be replaced by good governance that doesn't favor certain groups over others.

Countries have to truly invest in the education and skills and job training that our extraordinary young people need. And by the way, that's boys and girls and men and women, because countries will not be truly successful if half their populations—if their girls and their women—are denied opportunity. And America will continue to forge new partnerships in entrepreneurship and innovation and science and technology so young people from Morocco to Malaysia can start new businesses and create more prosperity.

Now, just as we address economic grievances, we need to face a third challenge, and that's addressing the political grievances that are exploited by terrorists. When governments oppress their people, deny human rights, stifle dissent, or marginalize ethnic and religious groups or favor certain religious groups over others, it sows the seeds of extremism and violence. It makes those communities more vulnerable to recruitment. Terrorist groups claim that change can only come through violence. And if peaceful change is impossible, that plays into extremist propaganda.

So the essential ingredient to real and lasting stability and progress is not less democracy, it's more democracy. It's institutions that uphold the rule of law and apply justice equally. It's security forces and police that respect human rights and treat people with dignity. It's free speech and strong civil societies where people can organize and assemble and advocate for peaceful change. It's freedom of religion where all people can practice their faith without fear and intimidation. All of this is part of countering violent extremism.

Fourth, we have to recognize that our best partners in all these efforts, the best people to help protect individuals from falling victim to extremist ideologies are their own communities, their own family members. We have to be honest with ourselves. Terrorist groups like Al Qaida and ISIL deliberately target their propaganda in the hopes of reaching and brainwashing young Muslims, especially those who may be disillusioned or wrestling with their identity. That's the truth. The high-quality videos, the online magazines, the use of social media, terrorist Twitter accounts—it's all designed to target today's young people online, in cyberspace.

And by the way, the older people here, as wise and respected as you may be, your stuff is often boring—[*laughter*]—compared to what they're doing. You're not connected. And as a consequence, you are not connecting. [*Laughter*]

So these terrorists are a threat, first and foremost, to the communities that they target, which means, communities have to take the lead in protecting themselves. And that is true here in America, as it's true anywhere else. When someone gets—starts getting radicalized, family and friends are often the first to see that something has changed in their personality. Teachers may notice a student becoming withdrawn or struggling with his or her identity, and if they intervene at that moment and offer support, that may make a difference.

Faith leaders may notice that someone is beginning to espouse violent interpretations of religion, and that's a moment for possible intervention that allows them to think about their actions and reflect on the meaning of their faith in a way that's more consistent with peace and justice. Families and friends, coworkers, neighbors, faith leaders—they want to reach out; they want to help save their loved ones and friends and prevent them from taking a wrong turn.

But communities don't always know the signs to look for or have the tools to intervene or know what works best. And that's where government can play a role—if government is serving as a trusted partner. And that's where we also need to be honest. I know some Muslim Americans have concerns about working with government, particularly law enforcement. And their reluctance is rooted in the objection to certain practices where Muslim Americans feel they've been unfairly targeted.

So, in our work, we have to make sure that abuses stop, are not repeated, that we do not stigmatize entire communities. Nobody should be profiled or put under a cloud of suspicion simply because of their faith. Engagement with communities can't be a cover for surveillance.

We can't "securitize" our relationship with Muslim Americans, dealing with them solely through the prism of law enforcement. Because when we do, that only reinforces suspicions, makes it harder for us to build the trust that we need to work together.

As part of this summit, we're announcing that we're going to increase our outreach to communities, including Muslim Americans. And we're going to step up our efforts to engage with partners and raise awareness so more communities understand how to protect their loved ones from becoming radicalized. We've got to devote more resources to these efforts.

And as government does more, communities are going to have to step up as well. We need to build on the pilot programs that have been discussed at this summit already—in Los Angeles, in Minneapolis, in Boston. These are partnerships that bring people together in a spirit of mutual respect and create more dialogue and more trust and more cooperation. If we're going to solve these issues, then the people who are most targeted and potentially most affected—Muslim Americans—have to have a seat at the table where they can help shape and strengthen these partnerships so that we're all working together to help communities stay safe and strong and resilient.

And finally, we need to do what extremists and terrorists hope we will not do, and that is, stay true to the values that define us as free and diverse societies. If extremists are peddling the notion that Western countries are hostile to Muslims, then we need to show that we welcome people of all faiths.

Here in America, Islam has been woven into the fabric of our country since its founding. Generations of Muslim immigrants came here and went to work as farmers and merchants and factory workers, helped to lay railroads and build up America. The first Islamic center in New York City was founded in the 1890s. America's first mosque—this was an interesting fact—was in North Dakota. [*Laughter*]

Muslim Americans protect our communities as police officers and firefighters and first responders and protect our Nation by serving in uniform and in our intelligence communities and in homeland security. And in cemeteries across our country, including at Arlington, Muslim American heroes rest in peace having given their lives in defense of all of us.

And of course, that's the story extremists and terrorists don't want the world to know: Muslims succeeding and thriving in America. Because when that truth is known, it exposes their propaganda as the lie that it is. It's also a story that every American must never forget, because it reminds us all that hatred and bigotry and prejudice have no place in our country. It's not just counterproductive; it doesn't just aid terrorists. It's wrong. It's contrary to who we are.

I'm thinking of a little girl named Sabrina who last month sent me a Valentine's Day card in the shape of a heart. It was the first Valentine I got. [*Laughter*] I got it from Sabrina before Malia and Sasha and Michelle gave me one. [*Laughter*] So she's 11 years old. She's in the fifth grade. She's a young Muslim American. And she said in her Valentine, "I enjoy being an American." And when she grows up, she wants to be an engineer or a basketball player. [*Laughter*] Which are good choices. [*Laughter*] But she wrote: "I am worried about people hating Muslims. . . . If some Muslims do bad things, that doesn't mean all of them do." And she asked, "Please tell everyone that we are good people and we're just like everyone else." Now, those are the words—and the wisdom—of a little girl growing up here in America, just like my daughters are growing up here in America. "We are just like everybody else." And everybody needs to remember that during the course of this debate.

As we move forward with these challenges, we all have responsibilities; we all have hard work ahead of us on this issue. We can't paper over problems, and we're not going to solve this if we're always just trying to be politically correct. But we do have to remember that 11-year-old girl. That's our hope. That's our future. That's how we discredit violent ideologies, by making sure her voice is lifted up, making sure she's nurtured, making sure that she's supported, and then recognizing, there

are little girls and boys like that all around the world; and us helping to address economic and political grievances that can be exploited by extremists and empowering local communities; and us staying true to our values as a diverse and tolerant society even when we're threatened—especially when we're threatened.

There will be a military component to this. There are savage cruelties going on out there that have to be stopped. ISIL is killing Muslims at a rate that is many multiples the rate that they're killing non-Muslims. Everybody has a stake in stopping them, and there will be an element of us just stopping them in their tracks with force. But to eliminate the soil out of which they grew, to make sure that we are giving a brighter future to everyone and a lasting sense of security, then we're going to have to make it clear to all of our children—including that little girl in fifth grade—that you have a place. You have a place here in America. You have a place in those countries where you live. You have a future.

Ultimately, those are the antidotes to violent extremism. And that's work that we're going to have to do together. It will take time. This is a generational challenge. But after 238 years, it should be obvious: America has overcome much bigger challenges, and we'll overcome the ones that we face today. We will stay united and committed to the ideals that have shaped us for more than two centuries, including the opportunity and justice and dignity of every single human being.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:20 p.m. in the South Court Auditorium of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Lisa O. Monaco; and Yusor Mohammad Abu-Salha, Razan Mohammad Abu-Salha, and Deah Shaddy Barakat, who were killed in Chapel Hill, NC, on February 10. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

Statement on the Observance of Ash Wednesday
February 18, 2015

Today Michelle and I join our fellow Christians across the country and around the world in marking Ash Wednesday. Lent is a season of sacrifice and preparation, repentance and renewal. Through reflection on the teachings that guide us, we reaffirm our commitment to God and one another, and we remember those who are suffering, including those persecuted for their faith. We join millions in deepening our faith as we look toward the Easter celebration.

Remarks at the White House Summit on Countering Violent Extremism
February 19, 2015

Thank you very much. Thank you, John. Good morning, everyone. I want to thank John Kerry, not only for his introduction, but for the outstanding leadership of American diplomacy. John is tireless. If he has not visited your country yet, he will soon. And I want to thank you and everybody here at the State Department for organizing and hosting this ministerial here today.

Mr. Secretary-General, distinguished guests, we are joined by representatives from governments because we all have a responsibility to ensure the security, the prosperity, and the human rights of our citizens. And we're joined by leaders of civil society, including many faith leaders, because civil society, reflecting the views and the voices of citizens, is vital to the success of any country. I thank all of you, and I welcome all of you.

We come together from more than 60 countries from every continent. We speak different

languages, born of different races and ethnic groups, belong to different religions. We are here today because we are united against the scourge of violent extremism and terrorism.

As we speak, ISIL is terrorizing the people of Syria and Iraq and engaging in unspeakable cruelty: the wanton murder of children, the enslavement and rape of women, threatening religious minorities with genocide, beheading hostages. ISIL-linked terrorists murdered Egyptians in the Sinai Peninsula, and their slaughter of Egyptian Christians in Libya has shocked the world. Beyond the region, we've seen deadly attacks in Ottawa, Sydney, Paris, and now Copenhagen.

Elsewhere, Israelis have endured the tragedy of terrorism for decades. Pakistan's Taliban has mounted a long campaign of violence against the Pakistani people that now tragically includes the massacre of more than a hundred schoolchildren and their teachers. From Somalia, al-Shabaab terrorists have launched attacks across East Africa. In Nigeria and neighboring countries, Boko Haram kills and kidnaps men, women, and children.

At the United Nations in September, I called on the international community to come together and eradicate violent extremism. And I challenged countries to come to the General Assembly this fall with concrete steps that we can take together. And I'm grateful for all of you answering this call.

Yesterday at the White House, we welcomed community groups from the United States, and some from your countries, to focus on how we can empower communities to protect their families and friends and neighbors from violent ideologies and recruitment. And over the coming months, many of your countries will host summits to build on the work here and to prepare for the General Assembly. Today I want to suggest some areas where I believe we can focus on as governments.

First, we must remain unwavering in our fight against terrorist organizations. And in Afghanistan, our coalition is focused on training and assisting Afghan forces. And we'll continue to conduct counterterrorism missions against the remnants of Al Qaida in the tribal regions. When necessary, the United States will continue to take action against Al Qaida affiliates in places like Yemen and Somalia. We will continue to work with partners to help them build up their security forces so that they can prevent ungoverned spaces where terrorists find safe haven and so they can push back against groups like al-Shabaab and Boko Haram.

In Iraq and Syria, our coalition of some 60 nations, including Arab nations, will not relent in our mission to degrade and ultimately destroy ISIL. And as a result of a separate ministerial here yesterday, many of our governments will be deepening our cooperation against foreign terrorist fighters by sharing more information and making it harder for fighters to travel to and from Syria and Iraq.

Related to this, and as I said at the United Nations last fall, nations need to break the cycles of conflict, especially sectarian conflict, that have become magnets for violent extremism. In Syria, Asad's war against his own people and deliberate stoking of sectarian tensions helped to fuel the rise of ISIL. And in Iraq, the failure of the previous Government to govern in an inclusive manner helped to pave the way for ISIL's gains there.

The Syrian civil war will only end when there is an inclusive political transition and a government that serves Syrians of all ethnicities and religions. And across the region, the terror campaigns between Sunnis and Shia will only end when major powers address their differences through dialogue and not through proxy wars. So countering violent extremism begins with political, civic, and religious leaders rejecting sectarian strife.

Second, we have to confront the warped ideologies espoused by terrorists like Al Qaida and ISIL, especially their attempt to use Islam to justify their violence. I discussed this at length yesterday. These terrorists are desperate for legitimacy. And all of us have a responsibility to refute the notion that groups like ISIL somehow represent Islam, because that is a falsehood that embraces the terrorist narrative.

At the same time, we must acknowledge that groups like Al Qaida and ISIL are deliberately targeting their propaganda to Muslim communities, particularly Muslim youth. And Muslim communities, including scholars and clerics, therefore, have a responsibility to push back not just on twisted interpretations of Islam, but also on the lie that we are somehow engaged in a clash of civilizations, that America and the West are somehow at war with Islam or seek to suppress Muslims, or that we are the cause of every ill in the Middle East.

That narrative sometimes extends far beyond terrorist organizations. That narrative becomes the foundation upon which terrorists build their ideology and by which they try to justify their violence. And that hurts all of us, including Islam, and especially Muslims, who are the ones most likely to be killed.

Obviously, there is a complicated history between the Middle East, the West. And none of us, I think, should be immune from criticism in terms of specific policies, but the notion that the West is at war with Islam is an ugly lie. And all of us, regardless of our faith, have a responsibility to reject it.

At the same time, former extremists have the opportunity to speak out, speak the truth about terrorist groups. And oftentimes, they can be powerful messages—messengers in debunking these terrorist ideologies. One said, "This wasn't what we came for, to kill other Muslims." Those voices have to be amplified.

And governments have a role to play. At minimum, as a basic first step, countries have a responsibility to cut off funding that fuels hatred and corrupts young minds and endangers us all. We need to do more to help lift up voices of tolerance and peace, especially online.

That's why the United States is joining, for example, with the U.A.E. to create a new digital communications hub to work with religious and civil society and community leaders to counter terrorist propaganda. Within the U.S. Government, our efforts will be led by our new coordinator of counterterrorism communications, and I'm grateful that my envoy to the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, Rashad Hussain, has agreed to serve in this new role. So the United States will do more to help counter hateful ideologies, and today I urge your nations to join us in this urgent work.

Third, we must address the grievances that terrorists exploit, including economic grievances. As I said yesterday, poverty alone does not cause a person to become a terrorist, any more than poverty alone causes someone to become a criminal. There are millions, billions of people who are poor and are law abiding and peaceful and tolerant and are trying to advance their lives and the opportunities for their families.

But when people, especially young people, feel entirely trapped in impoverished communities, where there is no order and no path for advancement, where there are no educational opportunities, where there are no ways to support families, and no escape from injustice and the humiliations of corruption, that feeds instability and disorder and makes those communities ripe for extremist recruitment. And we have seen that across the Middle East, and we've seen it across North Africa. So if we're serious about countering violent extremism, we have to get serious about confronting these economic grievances.

Here at this summit, the United States will make new commitments to help young people, including in Muslim communities, to forge new collaborations in entrepreneurship and science and technology. All our nations can reaffirm our commitment to broad-based development that creates growth and jobs, not just for the few at the top, but for the many. We can step up our efforts against corruption so a person can go about their day and an entrepreneur can start a business without having to pay a bribe.

And as we go forward, let's commit to expanding education, including for girls; expanding opportunity, including for women. Nations will not truly succeed without the contributions of their women. This requires, by the way, wealthier countries to do more. But it also requires countries that are emerging and developing to create structures of governance and transparency so that any assistance provid-

ed actually works and reaches people. It's a two-way street.

Fourth, we have to address the political grievances that terrorists exploit. Again, there is not a single perfect causal link, but the link is undeniable. When people are oppressed and human rights are denied, particularly along sectarian lines or ethnic lines, when dissent is silenced, it feeds violent extremism. It creates an environment that is ripe for terrorists to exploit. When peaceful, democratic change is impossible, it feeds into the terrorist propaganda that violence is the only answer available.

And so we must recognize that lasting stability and real security require democracy. That means free elections, where people can choose their own future, and independent judiciaries that uphold the rule of law and police and security forces that respect human rights and free speech and freedom for civil society groups. And it means freedom of religion, because when people are free to practice their faith as they choose, it helps hold diverse societies together.

And finally, we have to ensure that our diverse societies truly welcome and respect people of all faiths and backgrounds, and leaders set the tone on this issue.

Groups like Al Qaida and ISIL peddle the lie that some of our countries are hostile to Muslims. Meanwhile, we've also seen, most recently in Europe, a rise in inexcusable acts of anti-Semitism or, in some cases, anti-Muslim sentiment or anti-immigrant sentiment. When people spew hatred towards others, because of their faith or because they are immigrants, it feeds into terrorist narratives. If entire communities feel they can never become a full part of the society in which they reside, it feeds a cycle of fear and resentment and a sense of injustice upon which extremists prey. And we can't allow cycles of suspicions to tear at the fabric of our countries.

So we all recognize the need for more dialogues across countries and cultures. Those efforts are indeed important. But what's most needed today, perhaps, are more dialogues within countries, not just across faiths, but also within faiths.

Violent extremists and terrorists thrive when people of different religions or sects pull away from each other and are able to isolate each other and label them as "they" as opposed to "us," something separate and apart. So we need to build and bolster bridges of communication and trust.

Terrorists traffic in lies and stereotypes about others: other religions, other ethnic groups. So let's share the truth of our faiths with each other. Terrorists prey upon young impressionable minds. So let's bring our youth together to promote understanding and cooperation. And that's what the United States will do with our virtual exchange program, named after Ambassador Chris Stevens, to connect 1 million young people from America and the Middle East and North Africa for dialogue. Young people are taught to hate. It doesn't come naturally to them. We adults teach them.

I'd like to close by speaking very directly to a painful truth that's part of the challenge that brings us here today. In some of our countries, including the United States, Muslim communities are still small, in—relative to the entire population. And as a result, many people in our countries don't always know personally of somebody who is Muslim. So the image they get of Muslims or Islam is in the news. And given the existing news cycle, that can give a very distorted impression. A lot of the bad, like terrorists who claim to speak for Islam, that's absorbed by the general population. Not enough of the good, the more than 1 billion people around the world who do represent Islam and are doctors and lawyers and teachers and neighbors and friends.

So we have to remember these Muslim men and women: the young Palestinian working to build understanding and trust with Israelis, but also trying to give voice to her people's aspirations; the Muslim clerics working for peace with Christian pastors and priests in Nigeria and the Central African Republic to put an end to the cycle of hate; civil society leaders in Indonesia, one of the world's largest democracies; Parliamentarians in Tunisia working to build one of the world's newest democracies; business leaders in India, with one of the

world's largest Muslim populations; entrepreneurs unleashing new innovations in places like Malaysia; health workers fighting to save lives from polio and from Ebola in West Africa; and volunteers who go to disaster zones after a tsunami or after an earthquake to ease suffering and help families rebuild; Muslims who have risked their lives as human shields to protect Coptic churches in Egypt and to protect Christians attending mass in Pakistan and who have tried to protect synagogues in Syria.

The world hears a lot about the terrorists who attacked Charlie Hebdo in Paris, but the world has to also remember the Paris police officer, a Muslim, who died trying to stop them. The world knows about the attack on the Jews at the kosher supermarket in Paris. We need to recall the worker at that market, a Muslim who hid Jewish customers and saved their lives. And when he was asked why he did it, he said: "We are brothers. It's not a question of Jews or Christians or Muslims. We're all in the same boat, and we have to help each other to get out of this crisis."

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, I thank you for being here today. We come from different countries and different cultures and different faiths, but it is useful for us to take our wisdom from that humble worker who engaged in heroic acts under the most severe of circumstances. We are all in the same boat. We have to help each other. In this work, you will have a strong partner in me and the United States of America.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:33 a.m. at the Department of State. In his remarks, he referred to a European national known by the pseudonym Abu Mohammed, who fought in Syria against the regime of President Bashar al-Asad from 2012 to 2014; Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon of the United Nations; President Bashar al-Asad of Syria; Ahmed Merabet, a police officer killed in pursuit of the suspects in the January 7 terrorist attacks in Paris, France; and Lassana Bathily, clerk, HyperCacher supermarket in Paris. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

Remarks on the Establishment of the Honouliuli National Monument, the Browns Canyon National Monument, and the Pullman National Monument in Chicago, Illinois

February 19, 2015

The President. Hello, Chicago! Everybody, have a seat. Everybody, have a seat. Settle down. Also known as Chiberia! [*Laughter*]

Audience members. Yeah!

The President. It is good to be home. Even, even in February. [*Laughter*] It's always been a dream of mine to be the first President to designate a national monument in subzero conditions. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank your outstanding principal, D'Andre Weaver, for his warm hospitality—and his adorable daughter—[*laughter*]—and wonderful wife. I had a chance to talk to D'Andre, and one of the youngest principals, maybe ever, in Chicago and has just done extraordinary work. And the students and teachers who are here, way to go, because you guys are doing great. We're so proud of you.

I want to recognize some other people who braved the cold to join us. Governor Bruce Rauner is here. Our Secretary of the Interior, Sally Jewell, is here. Senator Mark Kirk is here. Outstanding Members of the House of Representatives: Robin Kelly, Bobby Rush, Mike Quigley, Bob Dold. We've got our Director of the National Park Service, Jon Jarvis. And we have our mayor, Mr. Rahm Emanuel.

Now, before Rahm was a bigshot mayor—[*laughter*]—he was an essential part of my team at the White House during some very hard times for America. And I relied on his judgment every day and his smarts every day

and his toughness every day. And along with many of the local leaders and Members of Congress, like Robin, who are here this afternoon, Rahm hasn't just fought for a National Park in Pullman, he's fought for new opportunity and new jobs in Pullman and for every Chicagoan, in every neighborhood, making sure every single person gets the fair shot at success that they deserve. And I could not be prouder of him and the extraordinary service that he's provided.

Now, it's always fun coming home. But this is special for me. This exit right over here, either 111th or 115th—depending on what was going on that day—I took that just about every day for about 3 years. I drove by this site every day on my way to Holy Rosary Church, where my first office of my first job in Chicago was, right across from the park. This was Mendel then. This is the neighborhood where I made lifelong friends. This is the area where I became a man. I learned so much about love and work and loyalty and friendship.

And to be able to come back here today, a place where I cut my teeth in being—getting involved in politics and organizing, a place where my mother-in-law worked at what was then Heritage/Pullman Bank, that means a lot. The only difference is, back then, in weather like this, I had to shovel out my own car—[*laughter*]—and chip off my own ice and try to warm up the car and stay warm, because the car didn't heat up real well. And I had a pretty raggedy coat. So I travel here with a little more comfort, better transportation. [*Laughter*] But it sure brings back a lot of good memories.

But I'm not here just to reminisce.

[*At this point, a child in the audience screamed.*]

The President. Yes! [*Laughter*] I'm here because next year is the 100th birthday of the National Park Service. For a century, rangers and interpreters and volunteers and visitors have kept alive what the writer Wallace Stegner once called "the best idea we ever had," our belief that the country's most special places should belong not just to the rich, not just to the powerful, but belong to everybody, not just now, but for all time.

Conservation is a truly American idea. The naturalists and industrialists and politicians who dreamt up our system of public lands and waters did so in the hope that, by keeping these places, these special places in trust—places of incomparable beauty, places where our history was written—then future generations would value those places the same way as we did. It would teach us about ourselves and keep us grounded and keep us connected to what it means to be American. And it's one of our responsibilities, as Americans, to protect this inheritance and to strengthen it for the future.

And that's why I've used my authority to set aside more public lands and waters than any President in history. And that's why, starting next month, we're going to encourage every American to "Find Your Park," because chances are, there's one closer than you think.

And that's why, starting this fall, we're going to help a new generation of Americans experience our God-given grandeur by giving every fourth grader in America what we're calling an "Every Kid in a Park" pass: a pass good for free admission to all public lands, for you and your family, for an entire year. We want every fourth grader to have the experience of getting out and discovering America. We want them to see the outside of a classroom too, see all the places that make America great: put down the smartphone for a second, put away the video games, breathe in some fresh air, and see this incredible bounty that's been given to us.

No matter who you are, no matter where you live, our parks and our monuments, our lands, our waters—these places are the birthright of all Americans.

And today, right here in Chicago, I'm using my powers as President to announce America's three newest national monuments, places that reflect our national history and our national heritage.

Now, first, we're announcing a new park in my home State—before I was adopted by Illinois—my home State of Hawaii. And the Honouliuli was once an internment camp for Japanese Americans during World War II. Going forward, it's going to be a monument to a

painful part of our history so that we don't repeat the mistakes of the past.

Then there's Browns Canyon, Colorado, which is an outdoor paradise with world-class fishing, rafting, hiking, wildlife. And from now on, it will be protected so that future generations can enjoy this land without threatening the things that make it so special.

And there's a reason why we're here on the South Side, right next to the neighborhood known as Pullman. It's not as warm as it is in Hawaii, and the views aren't as spectacular as in Colorado. But what makes Pullman special is the role it's played in our history. And the mayor talked a little bit about this. This place has been a milestone in our journey toward a more perfect Union.

More than 150 years ago, a carpenter named George Pullman moved to Chicago from New York. And he didn't start out with much, but he built his railway car company into one of the largest of its day. And as part of his empire, he built an entire town from scratch. George Pullman wasn't just the namesake of the place where his workers lived, he was also their boss and their landlord and their mayor and their superintendent and their sheriff.

Now, Pullman lived out America's promise. An extraordinary entrepreneur, he lived out the notion that each of us deserves the chance to transcend circumstances of our birth and make of our lives what we will. But for all his success, Mr. Pullman and the other tycoons of that period, the Gilded Age, they weren't always that keen about making sure their workers were able to live out the same promise.

So in 1893, a recession struck America. Pullman slashed his workers' pay; some saw their wages fall dramatically. Pullman didn't take a pay cut himself, and he didn't lower the rents in his company town. So his workers organized for better pay and better working and living conditions. A strike started here in Pullman, and it spread across the country. Federal troops were called to restore order. And in the end, more than 30 workers were killed.

Eventually, they returned to their jobs. But the idea they had sparked, the idea of organizing and collectively bargaining, couldn't be silenced. [*Applause*] Could not be silenced. And so just 6 days after the strike ended, an act of Congress established Labor Day, a day to honor working men and women of America. And gradually, our country would add protections that we now take for granted: a 40-hour work week, the weekend, overtime pay, safe workplace conditions, and the right to organize for higher wages and better opportunities.

So this site is at the heart of what would become America's labor movement and, as a consequence, at the heart of what would become America's middle class. And bit by bit, we expanded this country's promise to more Americans. But too many still lived on the margins of that dream.

The White workers who built Pullman's rail cars won new rights. But those rights were not extended to the Black porters who worked on these cars: the former slaves and sons and grandsons who made beds and carried luggage and folded sheets and shined shoes. And they worked as many as 20 hours a day on less than 3 hours sleep just for a couple dollars a day. Porters who asked for a living wage, porters who asked for better hours or better working conditions were told they were lucky to have a job at all. If they continued to demand better conditions, they were fired. It seemed hopeless to try and change the status quo.

But a few brave men and women saw things differently. And one summer night in 1925, porters packed a hall in Harlem, and a young man there named A. Philip Randolph led the meeting. And what A. Philip Randolph said was, "What this is about," he said, "is making you master of your economic fate." Making you master of your economic fate. And so he and others organized the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters around the strategy that he would employ throughout his life: "If you stand firm and hold your ground, in the long run, you'll win."

Now, that was easier said than done. Over the years, Brotherhood leaders and supporters were fired; they were harassed. But true to A. Philip Randolph's call, they stood firm, they held their ground. And 12 years to the day after A. Philip Randolph spoke in that hall in

Harlem, they won, and Pullman became the first large company in America to recognize a union of Black workers.

And this was one of the first great victories in what would become the civil rights movement. It wouldn't be the last victory. It was his union that allowed A. Philip Randolph to pressure President Roosevelt to desegregate the defense industry. It was those Pullman porters who gave the base by which A. Philip Randolph could convince President Truman to desegregate the Armed Forces. It was those porters who helped lead the Montgomery Bus Boycott, who were the central organizers of the March on Washington.

And on the day of that historic march, under the shadow of the President who had freed the slaves, A. Philip Randolph, who was now about 40 years older, a little grayer, but still standing just as firm—it was A. Philip Randolph who was the first to speak at that March on Washington. "We are the advance guard," he said, "of a massive, moral revolution for jobs and freedom."

"A massive, moral revolution for jobs and freedom." And that's not just the story of a movement, that's the story of America. Because as Americans, we believe that workers' rights are civil rights. That dignity and opportunity aren't just gifts to be handed down by a generous government or by a generous employer, they are rights given by God, as undeniable and worth protecting as the Grand Canyon or the Great Smoky Mountains.

And that's why, throughout our history, we've marched not only for jobs, but also for justice; not just for the absence of oppression, but for the presence of opportunity. And ultimately, that wasn't just for African Americans any more than the original Pullman union was just for White workers. Eventually, that principle would be embraced on behalf of women and Latinos and Native Americans; for Catholics and Jews and Muslims; for LGBT Americans; for Americans with mental and physical disabilities. That's the idea that was embodied right here.

That's why we've acted to give our citizens a measure of protection from the cruelties of fate with Social Security and Medicare and Medicaid and, yes, the Affordable Care Act, things that we now take for granted or we will take for granted someday. [*Laughter*] It's why we keep fighting to give every citizen a fair shot with schools and colleges and the Internet, tools we need in order to go as far as our efforts will take us, tools that the young people here are going to need so that they then can lead this great country of ours.

It's why we keep fighting to help working families feel more secure in a constantly changing world with childcare and equal pay, a higher minimum wage, and paid sick days—something I know that's on the ballot here in Chicago. It's why we have to keep fighting to treat these issues like the economic priorities they are. But they're also ideas of—about justice and fairness and the worth of every individual.

That's the story of this place: that, together, we can do great things that we cannot accomplish alone. That's why today I'm designating Chicago's Pullman District as America's newest national monument. I want this younger generation, I want future generations, to come learn about their past. Because I guarantee you, there are a lot of young people right here in Chicago, just a few blocks away, living in this neighborhood who may not know that history.

I want future generations to know that while the Pullman porters helped push forward our rights to vote and to work and to live as equals, their legacy goes beyond even that: that these men and women without rank, without wealth or title, became the bedrock of a new middle class; these men and women gave their children and grandchildren opportunities they never had.

Here in Chicago, one of those porters' great-granddaughter had the chance to go to a great college and a great law school and had the chance to work for the mayor and had the chance to climb the ladder of success and serve as a leader in some of our city's most important institutions. And I know that because today she's the First Lady of the United States of America, Michelle Obama.

So without this place, Michelle wouldn't be where she was. There's a reason why I've got one of the original copies of the program for the March on Washington, a march for jobs and justice, with A. Philip Randolph's name right there as the first speaker, framed in my office. Because without Pullman, I might not be there. Of course, without Michelle, I'd definitely not be there. [*Laughter*] Whoever she married would be there. [*Laughter*]

So, to the young people here today, that's what I hope you take away from this place. It is right that we think of our national monuments as these amazing vistas and mountains and rivers. But part of what we're preserving here is also history. It's also understanding that places that look ordinary are nothing but extraordinary. The places you live are extraordinary, which means you can be extraordinary. You can make something happen, the same way these workers here at Pullman made something happen.

That's not to tell you that life is always going to be fair or even that America will always live up to its ideals. But it is to teach us that no matter who you are, you stand on the shoulder of giants. You stand on the site of great historic movements. And that means you can initiate great historic movements by your own actions.

Generations before you fought and sacrificed, and some lost their jobs and some lost their lives to give you a better chance to be what A. Philip Randolph called the master of your fate. And I think all they'd ask for in return is that you take advantage of that, and when your time comes, you'll fight just as hard to give somebody else that chance.

Because for all the progress that we've made—and we have made a lot of progress—our moral revolution is unfinished. And it's up to each of us to protect that promise of America and expand that promise of opportunity for all people. That long march has never been easy. This place, historic Pullman, teaches us we have to keep standing firm and together. That's the story of who we are. That's the story of our past. And I have no doubt that we will pass the torch from generation to generation so that it is the story of our future as well.

So thank you, everybody. Thank you, Chicago. Thank you, Pullman. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2 p.m. at Gwendolyn Brooks College Preparatory Academy. In his remarks, he referred to D'Andre J. Weaver, principal, Gwendolyn Brooks College Preparatory Academy; and former Mayor Richard M. Daley of Chicago. He also referred to his mother-in-law Marian Robinson. Following his remarks, the President signed the proclamation establishing the Pullman National Monument. The proclamations of February 19 and February 24 are listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks to Campaign Volunteers for Mayor Rahm I. Emanuel and Alderman William D. Burns in Chicago
February 19, 2015

Hello, everybody! It is great to see all of you here on a phone bank. And I just want to first of all say Rahm Emanuel and Will Burns—where did Will go? Where is Will? Will, come on over here.

The reason I want to say something about Will is because it wasn't that long ago when Will was doing what you all are doing. He didn't have a fancy suit and pinstripes. [*Laughter*] And our office was a little smaller than this, and things were a little more raggedy and less organized. But when you see somebody who worked with you as a young person and then coming up and doing great things now as an alderman, we could not be prouder. And I would expect that he's going to do fine in my ward, because he's my own—and I hope my trees are being trimmed. [*Laughter*] Although, not right now, I guess. It's a little cold.

But the main reason I'm here is just to say thank you to all of you who are helping out Rahm. Rahm Emanuel is somebody who cares deeply about this city. He cares deeply about the children of this city. He's been willing to make some really hard decisions on behalf of those children and on behalf of our future. Everybody knows that he is passionate and he is tough and he is dogged in making sure that the city of Chicago is not just the coldest city—[*laughter*]—but also the greatest city.

And you look at what's been accomplished in education, what's been accomplished in terms of the infrastructure, bringing jobs back to this city, I have confidence as a voter, and as a resident of Chicago, that he's going to continue to do a great job.

But the only way that happens is if people get out there and vote. So all of you are critical to the process. Those of us standing here, we benefit from your willingness to be involved and participate in this great civic exercise we call democracy. And you're doing it on behalf of not only a great mayor, but also a great friend of mine. I couldn't be prouder. I'm glad he's my mayor, and I'm glad he's going to be my mayor for another 4 years.

Keep on making calls! Don't stop! Don't stop!

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:12 p.m. at a campaign office for Mayor Emanuel and Alderman Burns. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Meeting
February 20, 2015

The President. Hello, Democrats! Good to see all of you. Good to see you. This looks like a rowdy crowd. I think Donna got you all—you know, you always got to watch out for Donna. She's—she'll get you in trouble.

Everybody, have a seat. Have a seat. Have a seat.

Audience member. We love you, Obama!

The President. Oh, I love you back. Good to see you.

I want to thank Debbie Wasserman Schultz for being an outstanding chair of our party. She is a great partner. I want to thank our CEO, Amy Dacey, for the hard work she is doing day in and day out. To the Governors and the legislators and the mayors, State party leaders, DNC members, officers, and whoever else is here—[*laughter*]—young Democrats—I am thrilled to be with you.

Most importantly, thank you to every American in all 50 States who helps our party thrive at the grassroots level every single day. Because that's part of who we are—grassroots.

It's been about a year since our last meeting, and as I had indicated, as I had predicted, it was a breakthrough year for America. Last year, our economy created more than 3 million new jobs, the single best year for job growth since the 1990s. Over the past 5 years, as said, the longest stretch of private-sector job creation in American history, businesses adding nearly 12 million new jobs. And in perhaps the single most hopeful sign for middle class families in a very long time, wages are beginning to rise again.

So America is coming back. We've risen from recession. We have the capacity to write our own future. We're better positioned than any other nation on Earth. And all that is thanks to the hard work and sacrifice of the American people who we serve. But it's also thanks to the values and the policies at the core of this party that all of you have fought for.

As Democrats, we believe in giving every child a world-class education. And today, our younger students have earned the highest math and reading scores on record. Our high school graduation rate is at an alltime high. More Americans are graduating from college than ever before.

As Democrats, we believe in reducing our dependence on foreign oil and protecting our planet. Today, America is number one in oil, number one in gas, number one in wind power. Every 3 weeks, we bring on line as much solar power as we did in the entire year of

2008. And thanks to lower gas prices and higher fuel standards, the typical family should save about 750 bucks at the pump.

As Democrats, we believe in sensible rules that can prevent financial crisis and shield families from ruin and encourage fair competition. And today, we've got new tools to stop taxpayer-funded bailouts, a new consumer watchdog to protect families from predatory lending, new law to protect families from getting ripped off by credit card companies. We've extended the security and fundamental right to affordable, accessible health care to more than 10 million uninsured Americans. And we are counting. Each and every day, folks are signing up and benefiting because of what we fought for. [*Applause*] Because of what we fought for. Because of what you fought for.

Now, sometimes, because the news cycle is so quick, we forget how all this came about and the debates that we had last year or 2 years or 4 years or 6 years ago. I just want everybody to remember that at every step as we made policies, as we made this progress, we were told by our good friends, the Republicans—[*laughter*]—that our actions would crush jobs and explode deficits and destroy the country. I mean, I want everybody to do a fact-check—[*laughter*]—and go back to 2009, 2010, '11, '12, '13—just go back and look at the statements that were made each year by these folks about all these policies. Because apparently, they don't remember. [*Laughter*]

But the facts are before us. The economy kept growing. The stock market has more than doubled, restoring the ten—the 401(k)s of millions of people. Our deficits are down by two-thirds. I always find it curious that when a Democrat is President, deficits go down; Republican is President, and then, deficits are going up. And yet they try to take on the mantle of fiscal probity.

Our auto industry is firing on all cylinders. None of this is an accident. It's not an accident that America is creating jobs faster than at any time since the last time a Democrat was President. It's not an accident that our manufacturers are creating jobs for the first time since the last time a Democrat was President. It's not an accident that health care inflation is running at the lowest rate in almost 50 years and that our deficits are falling faster than they have in 60 years.

Audience member. I love you, Obama!

The President. Thank you. [*Laughter*]

It's because we believe in middle class economics. We believe in the idea that this country does best when everybody gets a fair shot, everybody is doing their fair share, everybody has to play by the same rules. Not top-down economics. Not trickle-down economics. If we were actually to look at the evidence, it's pretty clear whose theory of how to grow the economy and make sure American people are prospering—which theory works. We know their ideas don't work. We remember. Middle class economics, that works. Expanding opportunity, that works.

Now, I say all this not to be complacent, but precisely because we've got more work to do. Our job is not done. We still have a lot of progress to make to ensure that prosperity reaches everybody who goes to work early or studying late into the night, who's scrimping and saving from every paycheck to try to send their kids to college or try to retire with dignity and respect.

Everybody who has the privilege of serving the American people has to ask him- or herself a fundamental question: Are we going to accept an economy where only a few of us do spectacularly well, or will we build an economy that generates rising incomes and opportunities for everybody who's willing to work hard, everybody who's willing to make an effort? That's the question that we face at this moment.

And now that their grand predictions of doom and gloom and death panels and Armageddon haven't come true—[*laughter*]—the sky hasn't fallen, Chicken Little is quiet—[*laughter*]—the new plan, apparently, of congressional Republicans—and this is progress—the new plan is to rebrand themselves as the party of the middle class. I'm not making this up. [*Laughter*]

Our Republican leader in the Senate, as he was coming in, after having tried to block every single thing that we have done to strengthen

the economy, starts looking at the job numbers and says, you know, it's getting better because we just got elected—[*laughter*]—and people are feeling more optimistic. Which—[*laughter*]—okay. I didn't know that's how the economy worked. But maybe? [*Laughter*] We'll call some economists.

We have a Republican Congresswoman who said she couldn't agree with me more that we need to be helping working moms and dads. That's good. That's progress. One Republican Senator wrote a policy memo saying that Republicans "must define themselves as the party of the American worker and the party of higher wages." That's good. [*Laughter*] I'm glad they feel that way. Rand Paul said—Rand is an interesting guy, and Rand—[*laughter*]—no, he is. And Rand Paul said the Republican Party needs to show up on the South Side of Chicago and shout at the top of its lungs that "the GOP is the ticket to the middle class." I think that's encouraging that he wants to go to the South Side of Chicago. [*Laughter*] I want—no, I want all—I want parties to compete everywhere. I think that's a good thing.

And I was just home on the South Side of Chicago yesterday. And I guarantee you that Senator Paul would be welcomed there. We are a friendly bunch. [*Laughter*] I mean, it's a little strange if people show up and just start shouting at the top of their lungs—[*laughter*]—but we're friendly, and it would be okay. [*Laughter*] But I will say this. So I am encouraged that they're speaking about middle class and speaking about wages. But there is this old saying that you can't just talk the talk. Donna, you got to do what?

Democratic National Committee Vice Chair of Voter Registration and Participation Donna L. Brazile. Walk the walk.

The President. You got to walk the walk. We've been walking the walk. And if Republicans are serious about taking on the specific challenges that face the middle class, if they are prepared to walk the walk, we should welcome them. I'll welcome their ideas. There's nothing I'd like more than an opposition party that is willing to engage with us and work with us on these issues.

Maybe they've got different ideas, but genuine ideas about how young people can go to college or how we can make sure that workers are getting raises when the CEO of the company has seen their compensation go up 50 percent or 100 percent. If they've got concrete ideas on these issues, I want to hear them. I've been saying that to them since I came into office. But so far, at least, the rhetoric has not matched the reality.

If you want to help working moms and dads, you can't just dismiss things like childcare and paid leave. Work with us to treat them like the economic priorities that working families know they are.

If you want to be the party of higher wages, come on, join the dozens of cities and States, the companies like the Gap and now Walmart, raising wages, not just because it's the right thing to do, but because it's good for business. Don't stand in the way. You've got votes in Congress. You've got votes in the House. You've got votes in the Senate. Work with us. Join the rest of the country. Give America a raise! Let's go. [*Applause*] Let's go. Let's go! I'm ready. I'm ready!

If you are serious, if you're really troubled with income inequality, then you can't put forward proposals that give more tax breaks to the folks who are doing the best and millionaires and billionaires and then propose more cuts to the very programs that help working Americans get ahead.

If you want to be the party that's paving the way for people to get into the middle class, a good way to start is stop trying to strip health insurance from millions of Americans and preventive and contraceptive care for millions of women. And stop trying to deport millions of striving young kids who just want to earn their shot at the American Dream like the rest of us. Help us fix a broken immigration system. There are a lot of ways to help the middle class.

So look, I think the shift in rhetoric that they're engaging in is good if it actually leads them to take different actions. If it doesn't, then it's just spin. If it doesn't, if you're just trying to repackage the same top-down economics and use the words "middle class" attached

to it, if you're just going to keep on cutting taxes at the top and not raise minimum wages for folks who are struggling, then it's just spin. You're trying to bamboozle folks.

And looking backward is not the answer. We've got to look forward, all of us as Americans. And, Democrats, we've got to be the party that recognizes and responds to what Americans really face in a 21st-century economy. Our brand of middle class economics is very specific. We detail it: Here's what we're going to do. We can show you how it's going to help middle class families and folks striving to get in the middle class. We want to offer young people a stronger start. We want to work to make sure that families have more security in a world of constant change. And so we list out how we're going to help folks afford college. We specify how we're going to provide health insurance to folks who don't have it. We talk about how we can help the young family buy a home or the family entering into the middle age—a retirement that they can count on.

And that means we have to stop treating things like childcare and paid leave as side issues or women's issues. We've got to treat them as economic priorities. It means we've got to stand up for unions. It means that we've got to make sure that women are earning what men do for doing the same job. It means we support a fair living wage. We're very specific about how we want to help ordinary folks.

When we talk about helping people earn higher wages and better skills, we put forward specific programs: Here's more opportunities for job training. Here are apprenticeship programs that give workers the chance to earn higher paying jobs even if they don't have a higher education. Here's how we are going to help Americans burdened with student loans reduce their monthly payments. Here's how we're going to make community college free for every responsible student who wants to improve their lot in life.

Here's our program. What's yours? Tell us how you're helping middle class families, because we've got an agenda, and we know it works. Don't just talk about it.

We know middle class economics means we've got to have the most competitive economy in the world. So we're very clear: Here's how we're going to help businesses churn out good jobs for Americans to fill. And that means working to build a modern transportation and communications system. It means helping more companies sell goods overseas with strong new trade agreements that aren't just free, but fair, and level the playing field for American workers. It means investing in the research and technology that unleashes new jobs and new industries right here in America. We're very clear and specific—it's right there—about how we can do it. And we know it works because we've seen it work before.

We know middle class economics means getting rid of special interest giveaways in our Tax Code for folks who don't need them so we can actually give tax breaks to middle class families who do need them. We know that if we close loopholes that reward companies that stash profits overseas, we can reward companies that invest here in America. We know that if we close loopholes that allow the top 1 percent to avoid paying taxes on their accumulated wealth, we can use that money to help more middle class families pay for childcare and send their kids to college, and that will help the entire economy grow. We need a Tax Code that helps working Americans trying to get a leg up in this new economy, and that's worth fighting for.

And so we don't just talk the talk, we're walking the walk every day. I'm telling you, Democrats, we should never worry about fighting for these issues, because they are not only right, the American people stand right beside us on most of those issues. That—sometimes, that gets lost with all the money that's being spent by outside forces, the distortions and confusion. But when you actually look at do Americans agree with our policies, do they think these policies would help them, and when there's a fair presentation of the policies the other side is offering, the American people are with us every time.

But maybe we'll bring them around. [*Laughter*] And I think there are actual places

where we can work together, like reforming America's criminal justice system so it protects and serves all of us and it is fair. And I'm looking forward to working with them. But until they start wanting to walk and not just talk, we're going to keep offering the American people something better. We're going to offer the American people a vision that believes in opportunity not just for a few, but for everybody.

We've got to be the party that believes nobody should be treated like a second-class person regardless of what you look like or where you come from or who you love. We've got to be the party that doesn't just recognize the threat of climate change, but actually does something about it for the sake of our kids. We're the party that's willing to make tough decisions.

We've got to be the party that practices a better kind of politics, not just in Washington, but in every community in America, and that appeals to the basic decency of the American people; that sees our differences as a source of strength; that give young people a sense of purpose and possibility and asks them to participate in our great democracy; that appeals not to fear, but to hope.

Because this is not just about us in this room. This is not just a sports contest. This is not just about who's up and down at any given point. It's not about notches on a belt. It's not about ideological battles or proving how smart you are. It's not about the back-and-forth of politics. It's about doing things that make people's lives better. It's about doing things that make us confident that America will continue on this upward trajectory that began so many years ago. It's about making this Nation we love more perfect.

We are Democrats. We don't just want people to share in America's success, we want to see everybody contributing to America's success and building a smarter and stronger economy, forging a better and kinder society and writing the next great chapter in this great country's amazing story. That's what we're doing together, still moving forward.

Thank you, Democrats. God bless you. God bless America. Let's get to work.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:10 a.m. at the Hyatt Regency Washington on Capitol Hill hotel.

Remarks at a Democratic Governors Association Meeting
February 20, 2015

The President. Well, I want to welcome the Democratic Governors to this meeting and thank them for all the outstanding work that they are doing. I am a little concerned that David Ige of Hawaii does not know what to do with this weather. [*Laughter*] I don't even know if he owns a winter coat.

Governor David Y. Ige of Hawaii. I bought one in Colorado. [*Laughter*]

The President. But this gives me a chance to have an ongoing conversation with Governors. I've said in the past, and it continues to be true: Governors can't afford to just peddle an ideology, they've got to actually make things work on behalf of their constituencies. And this is where a lot of the rubber hits the road.

And the men and women around this table are doing some great work on the issues that are of uppermost priority to this administration. That is, making sure that we've got a strong brand of middle class economics, that we are giving opportunity for people who are working hard out there to succeed, and make sure that their wages and their retirement and their health care and the education for their kids—that those things are available and providing them pathways to be able to improve their lives.

We have made enormous progress over the last 6 years. As I've said before, last year, we saw the strongest job growth since the 1990s. We've had 59 straight months of uninterrupted private sector job growth, and manufacturing is stronger than it's been since the nineties. So we're seeing steady improvement in the economy. But we've got a lot more work to do. And

every one of the Governors here would acknowledge that there are still people who are not being reached by the progress that's been made and that we've got to really tackle some of these issues.

We've got to make sure that we are providing the kind of job training that people need to fill the jobs of the future. We've got to make sure that education is affordable and that we're using, not only our 4-year colleges and universities, but also our community colleges, which is why I'm going to be talking to them about how we can promote this notion of the first 2 years of college—community college—free for kids who are willing to earn it.

We need to make sure that workers are getting paid a fair wage. And I want to congratulate a number of the people around this room that either have already been able to pass a strong minimum wage in their State or are in the process of doing so and are advocating for it in the future.

I know there are others around this table who are advancing an agenda for paid sick leave. We've got 43 million people in this country, if they get sick, they've got to make a decision about whether they go to work sick, which is probably not very good for their coworkers or their employers or losing their paycheck, something that they probably can't afford. And so whether it's the work that's being done by Governor Malloy when it comes to being the first in the State to mandate paid leave, Governor Inslee fighting to do the same, Governor Shumlin signing a law to raise Vermont's minimum wage, others, like newly elected Governor Raimondo, working to increase the minimum wage in Rhode Island, we're seeing a lot of great work being done around this table.

And we're also going to be talking about some issues of national importance where we've had real leadership at the State level: clean energy, for example. Obviously, Governor Hickenlooper in Colorado has been doing a lot of work on those issues. We care about climate change, and we don't think it contradicts our need to also continually grow the economy and be energy independent.

So I want to thank everybody here. I'm looking forward to a great conversation. And all these folks are also then going to be putting on their dancing shoes, I think, on Sunday—[*laughter*]—when we have a chance to get all the Governors together for a little fellowship.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:15 p.m. in the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Dannel P. Malloy of Connecticut; and Gov. Jay R. Inslee of Washington.

The President's Weekly Address
February 21, 2015

Hi, everybody. At a moment when our businesses are creating jobs at the fastest pace since the 1990s, we've still got to do everything we can to help workers and businesses succeed in the new economy, one that's competitive, connected, and changing every day.

One thing we know for certain about businesses in the 21st century is that they'll need to sell more goods and services made in America to the rest of the world. Now, our businesses already sell goods and services in other countries at record levels. Our farmers, our factory workers, and our small businesses are exporting more than ever before, and exporters tend to pay their workers higher wages.

More small businesses are using the Internet to grow their business by reaching new customers they couldn't reach before too. As an example, 9 in 10 American small businesses that use eBay as a platform to sell their products are exporters, with customers in more than 30 different countries on average. But there's a lot of room for growth. After all, 95 percent of the world's potential customers live outside our borders.

Many of them live in the Asia-Pacific, the world's fastest growing region. And as we

speak, China is trying to write the rules for trade in the 21st century. That would put our workers and our businesses at a massive disadvantage. We can't let that happen.

We should write those rules. That's why Congress should act on something called trade promotion authority. This is bipartisan legislation that would protect American workers and promote American businesses with strong new trade deals from Asia to Europe that aren't just free, but are fair. It would level the playing field for American workers. It would hold all countries to the same high labor and environmental standards to which we hold ourselves.

Now, I'm the first to admit that past trade deals haven't always lived up to the hype. And that's why we've successfully gone after countries that break the rules at our workers' expense. But that doesn't mean we should close ourselves off from new opportunities and sit on the sidelines while other countries write our future for us. We should seize those opportunities. We should make sure the future is written by us. And if we do, we won't just keep creating good new jobs for decades to come, we'll make sure that this century is another all-American century.

Thanks, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 2:10 p.m. on February 20 in the Map Room at the White House for broadcast on February 21. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 20, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on February 21.

Remarks at the National Governors Association Dinner
February 22, 2015

The President. It's wonderful to see you all here tonight. Harry Truman once called the Presidency an "enlarged Governorship." [*Laughter*] Of course, a few of you are hoping that he was right. [*Laughter*] But Michelle and I are thrilled to host our Nation's Governors and your loved ones here tonight. If it's your first visit, then welcome to the White House. We promise a good time. The only thing we can't conjure up from the past is Governor Schwarzenegger on the dance floor. [*Laughter*] And it was something.

We are glad that the weather held up after yesterday's storm. And we've been thinking about you Governors from New England and everything that your citizens have been through this winter. I want to make sure we're working with each other to get what you need. It is a good thing that you are not coming on a snowstorm like there was during the dinner of 1987. Now, hours into the dinner, the food was gone. Everybody was standing around. The snow seemed to keep falling harder and harder. And President Reagan looked out the window and turned to the First Lady and said, "Honey, do we have enough cots?" [*Laughter*] To which Nancy replied, "We have a few spare bedrooms." [*Laughter*]

But it looks like the weather has cleared up enough that there will not be a pajama party here in the Blue Room tonight. [*Laughter*] We are looking forward, though, to spending time with one another in fellowship and good food and good entertainment, and undoubtedly, we'll find that we have more in common than sometimes is assumed. And I—hopefully, that will inform the business that we do together tomorrow.

Our economy keeps improving. And I hope that we can seize on that momentum to keep improving the circumstances for every one of our citizens: keep building a country where every citizen can look around and see cause for optimism about the future, not only for themselves, but also for their children and their grandchildren; feel good about their own prospects and the country's prospects.

Within this room, we're not going to agree on everything, but I am committed to working with each and every one of you over the next 2 years to keep making progress. And we'll talk more about that tomorrow. Tonight I just want to express my appreciation to all of you, all of

the hard work that you bring to bear. And I want to say thank you to the spouses as well, because I know that's a particularly difficult job, trying to keep us in line.

So let me propose a toast: To our citizens, to our spouses, to our families, and to what Thomas Jefferson once described as our country's precious blessings, "its soil, its climate, its equality, liberty, laws, people, and manners . . . which no other people on Earth enjoy." Cheers.

Audience members. Cheers.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:17 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former Gov. Arnold A. Schwarzenegger of California; and former First Lady Nancy Davis Reagan.

Remarks to the National Governors Association
February 23, 2015

Thank you, everybody. Thank you. Thank you so much. Everybody, have a seat. Welcome to the White House once again. The only thing more glamorous than a black-tie dinner with Hall and Oates is a Q&A with Obama and Biden. [*Laughter*] So we save the best for last. I know you guys are excited.

I want to thank everybody for being here. I'm going to be very brief. As Joe said, last year was a breakthrough year for the United States. Last year, the economy created more than 3 million new jobs, and that's the best job growth in any single year since the 1990s. The same was true for manufacturing growth. In fact, manufacturing jobs grew even faster than the overall economy. Deficit cut by two-thirds. Energy production at an alltime high. All told, businesses have now created over 12 million jobs over the last 5 years. And the best news of all: Wages have started to go up.

So America is as well positioned as we've been in a very long time. And the question is, what kind of choices do we now make together to make sure that that momentum is sustained? I have talked about before, and I want to emphasize again during our conversations, the belief that middle class economics is what works: the idea that not only do we want the country as a whole to prosper, but we want to make sure that every single person in this country has opportunity; that if they work hard, they can get ahead; that prosperity is broadly shared; and not only is everybody sharing in that prosperity, but everybody is contributing to that prosperity. And in order to do that, we've got to make sure that everybody has got a fair shot, that everybody does their fair share, and everybody is playing by the same set of rules. We've got to make sure that anybody out there who is scrimping and saving and trying to figure out how to send their kids to college and worrying about retirement, that they've got some sense of security and some sense that they can make it.

As Joe indicated, I think every one of the Governors here in every one the States of this great Union of ours cares about these same things and is doing a lot of creative work to enhance the opportunities for advancement for their citizens. You've got States like Oklahoma that are leading the way in making sure that we're educating our children at the earliest age with high-quality early childhood and pre-K education.

Since nine—2013, 17 States have joined companies like the Gap and now Walmart to raise their minimum wage, make sure that some of the hardest working people in America are able to support their families if they're working full time. States are leading the way in removing unnecessary licensing requirements so workers can start filling up some of the jobs that they already have the skills for. You've got States like California that are leading the way in providing paid leave so that mom or dad can take a day off to care for a sick child or an aging parent without having to give up a paycheck.

And States are leading the way in making sure more people have the security of health insurance. And today, thanks to the Affordable

Care Act, more than 10 million Americans now have the peace of mind that comes with being covered. I want to thank all the Governors, Democrats and Republicans, supporters and some opponents of the ACA, who have expanded Medicaid to millions of people over the past 2 years. I think there's a recognition that it makes sense and it's bigger than politics. As Governor Kasich said for Ohio: "It saves lives. No question about it." And if your State isn't one of the 28 that has already expanded Medicaid, I'd urge you to consider it, because our team is prepared to work with you to make it happen.

Because some of you may not always agree with my approach or policies, I think that we can all agree that it's a good thing when a family doesn't lose a home just because a member of that family gets sick. And surely, we can agree that it's a good thing when businesses have roads and bridges and ports and the kind of Internet connections that allow all of us to thrive.

Surely, we can all agree that when workers and management come together around helping families getting ahead, that's a good thing and that it's a good thing when workers and businesses can compete on a level playing field, with new agreements for fair and free trade in some of the world's fastest growing markets.

So that's going to be my agenda for the next 2 years. Congress may pass parts of that agenda, not others, but I'm going to keep on pushing for these ideas because I believe it's the right thing to do. I think it's right for America.

And I will keep urging Congress to move past some of the habits of manufactured crises and self-inflicted wounds that have so often bogged us down over the last 5 years. We've got one example of that right now. Unless Congress acts, one week from now, more than a hundred thousand DHS employees, Border Patrol, port inspectors, TSA agents, will show up to work without getting paid. Now, they all work in your States. These are folks who, if they don't have a paycheck, are not going to be able to spend that money in your States. It will have a direct impact on your economy, and it will have a direct impact on America's national security, because their hard work helps to keep us safe. And as Governors, you know that we can't afford to play politics with our national security.

So instead, let's try to focus on some of the things that we have in common and deliver real results. I want to thank Governor Inslee and his fellow West Coast Governors who have helped workers and management reach an agreement that reopened 29 ports and kept business flowing. I got to add a plug for Tom Perez, who went out there and, I think, really made an extraordinary contribution to that effort. That's going to make a big difference for the country's economy as a whole. That's the kind of thing that we can accomplish when we put aside divisions and focus on some commonsense steps to improve the economy for everybody. And it's an example that I hope Congress follows in the months ahead.

Keep in mind, though, even when Congress does not act or does not act fast enough, I think we can still work together to make a difference. And whether you're a Democrat or a Republican, what I've found is that the more specific we are on focusing on problems, less concerned we are about politics, the more we get accomplished.

Now, I'll give you one specific example, and that's in the criminal justice area. Last year was the first time in 40 years that the Federal incarceration rate and the crime rate went down at the same time. First time in 40 years. Let's keep that progress going and reform our criminal justice system in ways that protect our citizens and serves us all. In Georgia, Governor Deal has given judges new alternatives to harsh mandatory minimum sentencing. In Connecticut, Governor O'Malley [Malloy]* announced his "Second Chance Society" plan to help former prisoners rejoin their communities. We want to be a partner in those efforts.

And that's what the American people expect. One of the great privileges of being

* White House correction.

President is, you get to travel everywhere and you get to meet people from just about every walk of life. And what I have found is the assumption that I made, that I think Joe made when we first ran for office, still holds true: The American people are good and decent, and they have a lot more in common than our politics would indicate. And if we can just focus on that, there's a lot of good stuff that we can get done.

So I'm in the fourth quarter of my Presidency, or as some of you might call it, the kickoff for your campaign season. [*Laughter*] But I think there's still a lot that we can get done together. I think we can build an America that is creating more opportunities for hard-working folks. I think we can make sure that the future for the next generation is even brighter than the one that we enjoyed. And I look forward to making progress together at the Federal and State levels. Okay?

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:27 a.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to musicians Daryl Hall and John Oates; Gov. Jay R. Inslee of Washington; and Gov. Dannel P. Malloy of Connecticut.

Remarks at AARP Headquarters
February 23, 2015

Thank you. It is great to be back here—not just to pick up my AARP card. [*Laughter*] I want to thank Jo Ann and everybody at AARP for the work you do every single day on behalf of seniors. I am especially grateful to all of you for the seniors work you're doing to help us prepare for the White House Conference on Aging, which will be coming up later this year and will cover a whole host of issues, including protecting one of the most critical components of middle class life, and that's a secure and dignified retirement. And that's what we're here to talk about today.

I want to thank some other people who care passionately about this issue: My energetic, tireless Secretary of Labor, Tom Perez; a couple of outstanding Senators, Cory Booker from New Jersey and Elizabeth Warren from Massachusetts. And Congressmen John Delaney is here—proud of the work he is doing.

So 6 years after the financial crisis that shook a lot of people's faith in a secure retirement, the good news is, our economy is steadily growing and creating new jobs. Last year was the best year for job growth since the 1990s. And all told, over the past 5 years, the private sector has created nearly 2 million [12 million]* new jobs. And since I took office, the stock market has more than doubled, which means that 401(k)s for millions of families have been replenished.

America is poised for another good year, as long as Washington doesn't screw it up, as long as we keep the progress going with policies that help and don't hinder the middle class, no stalemates, no standoffs, no self-inflicted wounds or manufactured crisis—if we stay away from those things, then the projections are that the economy can do very well again this year.

But we're going to have to choose whether we accept an economy where only a few of us do spectacularly well or whether we build an economy where everybody who works hard can get ahead and have some semblance of security in this ever-changing world.

Because while we've come a long way, we've got a lot more work to do to make sure that the recovery reaches every single American out there and not just those at the top. That's what I've been calling middle class economics: the idea that this country does best when everybody does their fair share and everybody gets a

* White House correction.

fair shot and everybody is playing by the same set of rules.

And that last part—everybody playing by the same set of rules—is why we passed historic Wall Street reform that put in place smarter, tougher, commonsense rules of the road to protect consumers and to end taxpayer-funded bailouts. And by the way, I know that there have been times where folks questioned whether or not Wall Street reform works. If you look at how the banking system has responded, if you look at what's happened on Wall Street, when you look at how the markets gauge what we've done, reform has been meaningful. It has been effective.

That's why we passed a credit card bill of rights that gives consumers a simpler credit card bill: no more hidden fees, no more shifting deadlines, no more sudden changes of terms or "any time, any reason" rate hikes. It's why we created a new consumer watchdog agency that protects hard-working Americans from everything from predatory mortgage practices to payday loans that can destroy people's finances. And I want to thank our outstanding CFPB Director Rich Cordray and his team. They are working day in, day out to protect working families, and when families are taken advantage of, they've been working hard to get them their hard-earned money back.

Today, we're going to build on these consumer protections for the middle class by taking a new action to protect hard-working families' retirement security. Because, in America, after a lifetime of hard work, you should be able to retire with dignity and a sense of security.

And in today's economy, that's gotten tougher. Most workers don't have a traditional pension. A Social Security check often isn't enough on its own. And while the stark—stock market is doing well right now, that doesn't help folks who don't have retirement accounts. As a consequence, too few Americans at or near retirement have saved enough to have peace of mind.

So in addition to keeping Social Security strong—and we will keep it strong as I—as long as I am President. That is going to be a priority for me. In addition to keeping Social Security strong, I've proposed ways to make it easy and automatic for workers to save for retirement through their employer, including offering tax incentives to small businesses that offer retirement plans. And these proposals, it's estimated, would expand workplace savings opportunities to 30 million more workers. We've also proposed paying for them by closing tax loopholes for the wealthy.

At the same time, we've got to make sure that Americans who are doing the responsible thing by preparing for retirement are getting a fair share of the returns on those savings. That's what I want to focus on today. If you are working hard, if you're putting away money, if you're sacrificing that new car or that vacation so that you can build a nest egg for later, you should have the peace of mind of knowing that the advice you're getting for investing those dollars is sound, that your investments are protected, that you're not being taken advantage of.

And the challenge we've got is, right now there are no uniform rules of the road that require retirement advisers to act in the best interests of their clients, and that's hurting millions of working and middle class families. There are a lot of very fine financial advisers out there, but there are also financial advisers who receive backdoor payments or hidden fees for steering people into bad retirement investments that have high fees and low returns. So what happens is, these payments, these inducements incentivize the broker to make recommendations that generate the best returns for them, but not necessarily the best returns for you.

They might persuade investors, individuals with savings, to roll over their existing savings out of a low-fee plan and into a high-cost plan. They might even recommend investments with worse returns simply because they get paid to recommend those products. And one study by professors at Harvard and MIT had researchers send people to pose as middle class investors seeking investment advice from advisers. In 284 client visits, advisers recommended higher fee funds about half the time. The lowest fee funds were recommended only 21 times.

So think about what that means. You've done the right thing. You've worked hard. You've saved what you could. You're responsibly trying to prepare for retirement, but because of bad advice, because of skewed incentives, because of lack of protection, you could end up in a situation where you lose some of your hard-earned money simply because your adviser isn't required to put your interests first. And the truth is, most people don't even realize that's happening.

We read a story in the paper about Merlin and Elaine Toffel, a retired couple from near my hometown of Chicago, Lindenhurst, Illinois. They had worked their whole lives so they could rest easy in their golden years. They got bad advice to invest in expensive annuities that made it hard for them to access their money. Suddenly, they were short on cash, which is exactly what they had tried to avoid by saving and acting responsibly all those years. They were taken advantage of by an adviser of an institution where they had been longtime clients, and it was an institution they trusted. And Merlin now lives in a nursing home, and he and Elaine aren't here today. As they get older, their children are trying to help them get all this sorted out. And that's just one family. They're not alone.

On average, conflicts of interest in retirement advice results in annual losses of 1 percentage point for affected persons. Now, I know 1 percent may not sound like a lot, but the whole concept of compounding interest, it adds up. It can cut your savings by more than a quarter over the course of 35 years—cut your savings by more than 25 percent. So instead of $10,000 in savings growing to more than $38,000, it will grow to just over $27,500. That's a big spread. And all told, bad advice that results from conflicts of interest costs middle class and working families about $17 billion a year—$17 billion every year.

So you can put a number on how this affects us. But it affects something else. It offends our basic values of honesty and fair play. The values that say, in America, responsibility is rewarded and not exploited.

Now, I want to emphasize once again, there are a whole lot of financial advisers out there who do put their clients' interests first. There are a lot of hard-working men and women in this field and got into this field to help people. They're folks like financial adviser Sheryl Garrett, from Arkansas, who says, "The role"—is Sheryl here? There she is. Sheryl, stand up just so we can give her a round—[*applause*]. We're proud of Sheryl. So I'm quoting you, Sheryl. [*Laughter*] Sheryl says: "The role of a financial adviser is one of the most important jobs. But there is a segment of the industry today that operates like the gunslingers of the Wild West. We don't have the rules and regulations to protect those who we're supposed to be serving."

Couldn't have said it better myself, which is why I quoted you. [*Laughter*] Sheryl is right. The rules governing retirement investments were written 40 years ago, at a time when most workers with a retirement plan had traditional pensions and IRAs were brand new and 401(k)s didn't even exist. So it's not surprising that the rules that existed 40 years ago haven't caught up to the realities of most families today. Now, outdated regulations, legal loopholes, fine print—all that stuff today makes it harder for savers to know who they can trust. Financial advisers absolutely deserve fair compensation for helping people save for retirement and helping people figure out how to manage their investments. But they shouldn't be able to take advantage of their clients. The system makes it harder, in fact, for those financial advisers like Sheryl who are trying to do the right thing, because if she's making really good advice, but somebody who is competing with her is selling snake oil, she's losing business. And ultimately, those clients are going to lose money.

So today I'm calling on the Department of Labor to update the rules and requirements that retirement advisers put the best interests of their clients above their own financial interests. It's a very simple principle: You want to give financial advice, you've got to put your client's interests first. You can't have a conflict of interest.

And this is especially important for middle class families, who can't afford to lose even a penny of the hard-earned savings that they've put away. These folks aren't asking for any special help or special consideration. They just want to be treated with fairness and respect. And that's what this new rule would do. And for outstanding financial advisers out there, it levels the playing field so that they can do what they know is the right thing to do: putting their clients first.

Now, here's one last element of it I've got to emphasize. Just because we put forward a new rule doesn't mean that it becomes law. There are a lot of financial advisers who support these basic safeguards to prevent abuse, but there are also some special interests that are going to fight it with everything they've got, saying that these costs will skyrocket or services are going to be lost.

But it turns out that we can actually look at the evidence. These industry doomsday predictions have not come true in other countries that have taken even more aggressive action on this issue than we're proposing. And if your business model rests on taking advantage, bilking hard-working Americans out of their retirement money, then you shouldn't be in business. That's pretty straightforward.

So we welcome different perspectives and ideas on how to move forward. That's what the comment period for the rule is all about. What I won't accept is the notion that there's nothing we can do to make sure that hard-working, responsible Americans who scrimp and save somehow end up losing some of those savings to less than scrupulous practices. We should be able to make sure that folks are treated fairly and give every possible assistance we can so that they can retire with security and dignity.

So we're going to keep on pushing for this rule. It's the right thing to do for our workers. It's the right thing to do for our country. We are thrilled that AARP is supporting this, but AARP is not alone. We've got all kinds of organizations that are stepping up: consumer advocates, civil rights organizations, labor organizations. We've got a great coalition of people who understand that the strength of our economy rests on whether hard-working families can feel more secure, knowing that if they do the right thing, they can get ahead. And that's what I'm going to keep fighting for: an economy where not only everybody is sharing in America's success, but they're also contributing to America's success. This is a important component in that basic promise that makes America the greatest country on Earth.

So thank you so much, everybody. God bless you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:05 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Jo Ann Jenkins, chief executive officer, AARP; Tammy and Christopher Lombardo, daughter and son-in-law of Lindenhurst, IL, residents Merlin and Elaine Toffel; and Sherryl Garrett, founder, Garrett Planning Network, Inc.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Libya
February 23, 2015

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13566 of February 25, 2011, with respect to Libya is to continue in effect beyond February 25, 2015.

Colonel Muammar Qadhafi, his government, and close associates took extreme

measures against the people of Libya, including by using weapons of war, mercenaries, and wanton violence against unarmed civilians. In addition, there was a serious risk that Libyan state assets would be misappropriated by Qadhafi, members of his government, members of his family, or his close associates if those assets were not protected. The foregoing circumstances, the prolonged attacks, and the increased numbers of Libyans seeking refuge in other countries caused a deterioration in the security of Libya, posed a serious risk to its stability, and led me to declare a national emergency to deal with this threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States.

The violence that has spread throughout the country, resulting in the evacuation and temporary relocation of U.S. Embassy personnel, demonstrates the continued insecurity and threat to regional stability caused by the ongoing conflict in Libya. Much of the current conflict is over power and access to Libya's resources, and we run the risk of further destabilization if sanctions do not remain in effect. We continue to encourage Libyans to engage in dialogue and cease violence. Those that reject dialogue and obstruct and undermine Libya's democratic transition must be held accountable, which is why we worked with the U.N. Security Council to pass U.N. Security Council Resolution 2174 in August 2014 to address threats to Libya's peace, security, and stability. While we work with the international community to identify those individuals who pose a threat to Libya's democratic transition, we must also continue to ensure that the appropriate sanctions remain in place.

The situation in Libya continues to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States, and we need to protect against the diversion of assets or other abuse by certain members of Qadhafi's family and other former regime officials. Therefore, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency with respect to Libya.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to John A. Boehner, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate. The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Amir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani of Qatar

February 24, 2015

President Obama. Well, I want to welcome His Highness, the Amir of Qatar, for his first visit to the Oval Office in his current position.

The United States and Qatar have a very strong security relationship. They are hosts to our men and women in uniform. They are partners with us on a whole range of security initiatives. And we also have an extraordinary set of ties that are commercial, educational, scientific, technological. And those benefit Qatar; they benefit the United States. They create jobs in both countries. And Qatar is a major investor here in the United States as well.

We've had a wide-ranging conversation on a host of regional issues. Qatar is a strong partner in our coalition to degrade and ultimately defeat ISIL. And I expressed my appreciation to His Highness for the work that they've done in coordinating with other members of this coalition.

We are both committed to making sure that ISIL is defeated. We're both committed to making sure that in Iraq there is a opportunity for all people in that country—Sunni, Shia, and Kurd—to live together in peace.

We both are deeply concerned about the situation in Syria. We'll continue to support the moderate opposition there and continue to believe that it will not be able—possible to fully stabilize that country until Mr. Asad, who has

lost legitimacy in the country, is transitioned out. How we get there obviously is a source of extraordinary challenge, and we shared ideas in terms of how that can be accomplished.

We also had an opportunity to discuss a wide range of other areas where there's significant turmoil: Libya, Yemen. And I think had a significant meeting of the minds in our shared belief that the more that we can work with all the countries in the region to try to find political solutions to problems, the more that we can reduce sectarian tensions in the regions and isolate violent extremists, the more effective we can be.

And we also had a very useful discussion around Iran and the negotiations that are currently taking place to try to reduce the possibility of Iran obtaining a nuclear weapon. Those negotiations are ongoing. I gave the Amir an update and assured him that our goal here is to be able to verify that Iran does not have a nuclear weapon and that we will continue to press Iran on some of its other actions in the region that often have a destabilizing effect, recognizing, however, that we would greatly prefer to be able resolve many of these issues diplomatically. And I know that Doha shares the same view.

So overall, I want to say that this was a excellent conversation, and I think His Highness has a deeper understanding of the United States concerns around these issues and our interests. I emphasized to him that ultimately what the United States wants to see for all of the Middle East and all of North Africa is circumstances in which peace and security prevail and that people—particularly young people—have the opportunity to learn, to get educated, and to succeed in this modern economy.

Qatar is an extraordinary example of that, partly because it's been blessed by natural resources, but also because it's made good decisions about how to develop its economy. And hopefully, that kind of prosperity can be spread more widely in the years to come, and I look forward to being a partner with Qatar in making that happen.

So, Your Highness, thank you very much. Welcome.

Q. [*Inaudible*]

President Obama. Hold on a second.

Amir Tamim. In Arabic or English?

President Obama. Whatever you prefer.

Amir Tamim. Anyway, Mr. President, thank you very much for having me at the White House. I'm very happy to be here. I'm not going to repeat what you said, Mr. President, but things that I really want to say is how important the relation between Qatar and the United States of America and how to develop the strategic relation that we have. You mentioned that we have a strong relation in military and security, and also we have an excellent relation in education as well—and other things as well.

As we mentioned before that we are investing in this country. We believe in the economy of this country and the future of this country. So this is something very important as well for us.

We are all concerned on what's going on in our region. You mentioned the countries that we spoke about. Yes, we are concerned about it. We are concerned, as well, about the terrorist groups in our region. We—I think we all share the same view: the reason why those terrorist groups are growing in our region. And we have to make sure that to solve this problem we are all fighting terrorism—and it's a must—is to make sure that the reason why this happened doesn't happen again, because it happened a few years ago, and it's happening again now.

We mentioned about the situation in Palestine and about the peace process and what is the best for Palestine. And it is an—it is the important subject in the Middle East, and we have to find a solution for Palestine. And I'm happy to learn and to hear from you, Mr. President, that you are committed to find this peace process in Palestine.

I don't want to take—you mentioned everything, Mr. President, so thank you very much. I'm very happy to be here, sir.

President Obama. All right. Thank you so much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:45 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Bashar al-Asad of Syria. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

Message to the Senate Returning Without Approval the Keystone XL Pipeline Approval Act
February 24, 2015

To the Senate of the United States:

I am returning herewith without my approval S. 1, the "Keystone XL Pipeline Approval Act." Through this bill, the United States Congress attempts to circumvent longstanding and proven processes for determining whether or not building and operating a cross-border pipeline serves the national interest.

The Presidential power to veto legislation is one I take seriously. But I also take seriously my responsibility to the American people. And because this act of Congress conflicts with established executive branch procedures and cuts short thorough consideration of issues that could bear on our national interest—including our security, safety, and environment—it has earned my veto.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
February 24, 2015.

Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session at an MSNBC/Telemundo Immigration Town Hall in Miami, Florida
February 25, 2015

MSNBC and Telemundo News Anchor José Díaz-Balart. Ladies and gentlemen, the President of the United States.

It's good to see you, Mr. President.

The President. It's good to be with you, José.

Mr. Díaz-Balart. Thanks for being here at FIU. Really appreciate you being here with us.

The President. It is wonderful to be with the Golden Panthers.

Mr. Díaz-Balart. There you go!

Mr. President, let's begin. It's going to be a little bilingual at times, but you and I are used to that.

The President. I can handle that.

Mr. Díaz-Balart. Thanks.

Immigration Reform/President's Executive Actions on Immigration/U.S. District Court Opinion in Texas, et al. v. United States

[*At this point, Mr. Díaz-Balart asked a question in Spanish, which he translated into English as follows.*]

Senator McConnell, on Tuesday, made an offer to break the Department of Homeland Security impasse. He wants to vote to fund DHS through September and then separately vote to strip funding for your executive actions on immigration. As you know, it seems as if the Democrats are on board in the Senate. We're 48 hours from the deadline. Republicans have a plan. Democrats seem to be on board. You're waiting on a judge. Is that enough?

The President. Well, José, let me start by just talking generally about why immigration is so important and why we've got to fix a broken system.

We've had a system for a very long time that nobody is happy with. We know that businesses are being deprived of outstanding workers. We know that our agricultural sector that's so dependent on immigrants is hurting because of uncertainty. We know that we should be deploying our resources and focusing it more on dealing with felons and national security issues with respect to our borders and not focusing on the mom who's working someplace, looking after her kids and doing the right thing.

And for over 6 years, now, I've been calling on the Republicans to work with us to pass a comprehensive fix that would strengthen our borders, that would make sure that businesses

have the workforce that they needed, aboveboard, not paying them under the table, not depriving them of things like overtime or workers' rights, and that we provided a pathway for people to earn their way into a legal status and ultimately citizenship.

And to their credit, Members of the Senate passed a bipartisan bill, overwhelmingly. But the House Republicans blocked it. They refused to even allow it to get on the floor for a vote. What I did, then, was to say, I'm going to use all of the authority that I have as the Chief Executive of the United States, as well as Commander in Chief, to try to make sure that we are prioritizing our immigration system a lot smarter than we've been doing. And what that means is, is that instead of focusing on families, we're going to focus on felons. We're going to strengthen our borders, which are people—is what people are concerned about.

We're going to build on what we did in 2012 with DACA, which allowed young people who had come here and were Americans in all respects except they didn't have the proper papers to get legal so that they could continue in their higher education or serving in the military——

Mr. Díaz-Balart. They know no other country.

The President. They know no other country. And this approach of executive actions has been used by previous Republican and Democratic Presidents throughout modern times.

Now, what we did most recently was to expand that so that more people would qualify for DACA, and we also said if you are the parent of a U.S. citizen or a legal resident, if you've been here for a while, if you're part of our community, then you should be able to come forward, get registered, go through a background check, and if you generally have been contributing to our community, you should be able to stay here legally and not be in fear of deportation.

It did not provide citizenship because only Congress could do that, but it was going to help. And I think we saw the reaction in the community, and the truth is, across the country, people recognized this was the right thing and the smart thing to do.

Now, unfortunately, a number of Republican Governors chose to sue. They found a district court judge who has enjoined—meaning stopped—us going forward with this program. But that's just the first part of the process. This is just one Federal judge. We have appealed it very aggressively. We're going to be as aggressive as we can because not only do we know that the law is on our side, but history is also on our side.

And in the meantime, what we said to Republicans is, instead of trying to hold hostage funding for the Department of Homeland Security, which is so important for our national security, fund that, and let's get on with actually passing comprehensive immigration reform.

So in the short term, if Mr. McConnell, the leader of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House, John Boehner, want to have a vote on whether what I'm doing is legal or not, they can have that vote. I will veto that vote, because I'm absolutely confident that what we're doing is the right thing to do. And in the meantime, we're going to continue to pursue all legal avenues to make sure that we have a country in which we are respecting not only the law, because we're a nation of laws, but we're also respecting the fact that we're a nation of immigrants.

And I'm confident that, ultimately, people who have been living here for a long time, who have roots here, oftentimes have U.S. citizen children here or legal resident children here, that they deserve to have an opportunity. And that's what we want to provide them.

The President's Executive Actions on Immigration/Border Security

[*Mr. Díaz-Balart asked a question in Spanish, which was translated by an interpreter as follows. The translation could not be verified because no audio of the translation was available.*]

Mr. Díaz-Balart. Mr. President, independently of what can happen with all the appeals and judges, it would take months. Mr.

President, we're facing very real consequences and our community is in fear—has fear that's due to your actions, because that fear is that uncertainty. Millions of people are in the balance here against a rock and a hard place. What is the responsibility you feel regarding this uncertainty, this pain that a lot of the community, the Hispanic community are feeling?

The President. Well, one of the most important things that I think everybody needs to know—and this didn't get enough attention when I made my announcement last year—in addition to expanding DACA, in addition to creating the DAPA program for the parents of DREAMers, what we also did was, we said we're going to change how ICE and our Border Patrol system operates. Because we recognize we're not going to deport 11 million people. And so why we would want to allocate resources in a wasteful way, that doesn't make sense.

What we said was, let's prioritize who it is that we're really focused on. We're focused on criminals and gang members who are a threat to our community. And we're focused on the border and making sure the people who have just come, that we are making sure that they are in a position where they understand that they've got to come through legal pathways. But for people who've been living here for a long time, they are no longer prioritized for enforcement and deportation.

And so, even as people should be preparing their paperwork so that when the time comes that they can apply, in the meantime, understand that ICE and the border security mechanisms that we have in place, they are instructed to focus on criminals and people who have just crossed the border. If you've been here for a long time and if you qualify, generally, then, during this period, even with legal uncertainty, they should be in a good place.

Enforcement of the President's Executive Actions on Immigration

Mr. Díaz-Balart. And the problem is, Mr. President, that that may be the fact, but in—where the rubber meets the road, that's not happening many times.

The President. Well——

Mr. Díaz-Balart. Many times, people are being deported that have been here, that have kids, that have a process to even become legal, and they're being deported. So one thing is what you're saying, and another thing, a lot of times, is what happens where the rubber meets the road.

The President. Well, I think what you're going to be finding, José, is, is that every time that you have a big bureaucracy and you've changed policy, there's going to be one or two, three instances where people apparently haven't gotten the message. But if you talk to the head of Department of Homeland Security, Jeh Johnson, he is absolutely committed to this new prioritization. More importantly, I, the President of the United States, am absolutely committed to this new prioritization.

And so families out there need to understand that we are going to be focusing on criminals. We're going to be focusing on potential felons. We are reorganizing how we work with State and local governments to make sure that we are not prioritizing families. And you are going to see, I think, a substantial change, even as the case works its way through the courts.

Mr. Díaz-Balart. Mr. President, I want to go to the audience. Eric Narvaez is a war veteran. He was wounded in Afghanistan. He is with us this afternoon.

Eric.

Immigration Reform/President's Executive Actions on Immigration/U.S. District Court Opinion in Texas, et al. v. United States/Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Policy

Q. Good afternoon, Mr. President.

The President. Hey, Eric.

Q. First and foremost, I want to thank you for coming here. There's so many things going on in the world right now, and I just want to thank you for taking your time to come and talk to us, because I know you have to deal with so many things. I can only imagine what you have to deal with every day.

But a little bit about myself. When I was 17, I joined the U.S. Army. Actually, my mom had to sign because I was so young. My 18th birthday, I was—spent in basic training, and my

21st birthday was spent in Afghanistan, and I was actually shot at on my birthday. I came back. I'm a wounded warrior. I was medically discharged from the military in 2011. And I come back home and only to find out that I'm fighting another war with my mother, trying to keep her here.

So I just want to ask you, Mr. President, if there has to be some kind of gray area for a situation like this. Because I put in a lot of time, and I love this country, and I just feel like if it wasn't for her signing those papers, I would never have been able to join this great American Army. So I want to ask you if there's any way that situation could be handled a little better.

The President. Well, first of all, let me just say thank you, Eric, for your incredible service to our country. And you're a great example of why this issue is so important. Our country is strong because of generation after generation of immigrants who embraced the ideals of America and then fought for those ideals and fought in wars to defend our country and built companies that employed people and helped to build the railroads and the highways. And all the things that we take for granted in this country, those were built by immigrants. We're all immigrants. That's who we are. Unless you're one of the first Americans—Native Americans. And so we have to recognize that.

And I'm confident that your mother qualifies under the executive action program that I've put forward. Right now the judge has blocked us initiating the program where she can come and sign up and get registered. But in the meantime, part of the message that I'm sending is, if you qualified for the executive action that I put forward, then we're still going to make sure that your mom is not prioritized in terms of enforcement. And she should feel confident about that. So I just want to assure her, short term.

Long term, we need a situation where she has a pathway to become a legal citizen. And that's why we still have to make sure that we get a bill passed through Congress, and we have to keep the pressure on those who are blocking that bill.

One last point that I think is important: The judge in this case did not reverse DACA that I put forward in 2012. So hundreds of thousands of young people all across the country who have signed up, registered, and are going to school, making something of their lives—you have to understand, that hasn't been affected whatsoever.

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Policy

Mr. Díaz-Balart. Expand on that a little bit, because it's important.

The President. Well, it's important that in 2012, when I made my first announcement about executive actions, that applied to the DREAMers. Basically, if you were—if you had come here before 2007, you were between the ages of 16 and 30, you could register, sign up, you now had a legal status. It was temporary because we hadn't passed a bill yet, but it meant that you could get a work permit, you could go to school, you could do the things that American kids do as they're entering into adulthood.

That has not changed. And so those who have already signed up, you need to understand that has not been challenged and in court. And what's also important is we still have several hundred thousand young people who qualified for that original executive action back in 2012 who have not yet taken advantage of it. And now is the time for all of you to take advantage of that.

The President's Executive Actions on Immigration/U.S. District Court Opinion in Texas, et al. v. United States

Mr. Díaz-Balart. Eric, thank you for that question.

And, Mr. President, we've been just flooded with questions using our social media hashtags, and this one comes from the hashtag #ObamaResponde. It says:

[*Mr. Díaz-Balart read the question in Spanish, which he translated as follows.*]

It says: "How do you guarantee that an immigrant who is in the middle of legalizing his status that he or she is not going to be deported by ICE? Mr. President, my husband was deported during the process, and this," she says, "happened just last week."

The President. I would have to know the details of what exactly happened. But what I can tell you is that until we pass a law through Congress, the executive actions that we've taken are not going to be permanent; they're temporary.

We are now implementing a new prioritization. There are going to be some jurisdictions, and there may be individual ICE officials or Border Patrol who aren't paying attention to our new directives. But they're going to be answerable to the head of the Department of Homeland Security, because he's been very clear about what our priorities should be. And I've been very clear about what our priorities should be.

And the—I don't know what the particular circumstances here are, but what I can tell you is, people who have signed up, for example, under my executive action in DACA—there are seven, 800,000 people who signed up—they haven't had problems. It's worked. So we know how to make this work.

Right now we've got a judge who's blocking it from working. And in the interim, until we can actually process all these applications, then what we're going to do is do what we can in terms of making sure that we're prioritizing it properly.

Mr. Díaz-Balart. But what are the consequences——

The President. But the challenge is still going to be that not only do we have to win this legal fight, which we are appealing very aggressively, but ultimately, we're still going to have to pass a law through Congress.

The bottom line is, José, that I'm using all of the legal power vested in me in order to solve this problem. And one of the things about living in a democracy is that we have separation of powers—we have Congress, we have the judicial branch—and right now we've got some disagreements with some Members of Congress and some members of the judiciary in terms of what should be done.

But what I'm confident about is, ultimately, this is going to get done. And the reason it's going to get done is, it's the right thing to do and it is who we are as a people.

Enforcement of the President's Executive Actions on Immigration

Mr. Díaz-Balart. But what are the consequences? Because how do you ensure that ICE agents or Border Patrol won't be deporting people like this? I mean, what are the consequences?

The President. Well, José, look, the bottom line is, is that if somebody is working for ICE and there is a policy and they don't follow the policy, there are going to be consequences to it. So I can't speak to a specific problem. What I can talk about is what's true in the Government, generally.

In the U.S. military, when you get an order, you're expected to follow it. It doesn't mean that everybody follows the order. If they don't, they've got a problem. And the same is going to be true with respect to the policies that we're putting forward.

U.S. District Court Opinion in Texas, et al. v. United States/Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act/Immigration Reform/2016 Presidential Election

Mr. Díaz-Balart. Mr. President, people in your own administration, legal experts, predicted for weeks really that the Texas judge could probably rule against you. And this could happen again. I mean, you just mentioned there are more than 25 people who have joined in—and States who have joined in this legal process. Any and all of these other cases or judges could also act the same way that this judge in Texas did. So where was the contingency plan? I mean, did you have a contingency plan? Specifically, what are you going to do going forward as this process continues?

The President. Well, José, the—we've got one judge who made this decision. We appeal it to a higher court. We believe that the law is

clearly on our side. This is true in everything that we do.

Look at the Affordable Care Act. We've signed up 11 million people to get coverage through the Affordable Care Act. Over 2.5 million of them are Latino. Because of what we've done, we've seen the percentage of uninsured Latinos drop by almost 7 percent. It's unprecedented. So we know it can work.

Now, that hasn't stopped the Republican Party from suing us constantly, to try to find a judge who may think that what we're doing is in appropriate, despite the fact that it passed through Congress. We've got a Supreme Court that is still ruling on these cases. But that hasn't stopped us from moving forward.

And that's been true historically on every movement of social progress. It's not always a straight line. Sometimes, we're going to get legal challenges, but as long as we're confident—and I am very confident in this circumstance that this is within my power—that ultimately then, it's going to get done.

But the one thing I do want to emphasize is that in order for us to get absolute certainty that it's going to be permanent and not just temporary, that it doesn't just last during my administration and then get reversed by the next President, is, we've got to pass a bill, which means the pressure has to continue to stay on Congress. The pressure has to continue to stay on the Republican Party that is currently blocking the passage of comprehensive immigration reform.

It means that for the next set of Presidential candidates—because I'm term limited; Michelle is happy about that—[*laughter*]—when they start asking for votes, the first question should be, do you really intend to deport 11 million people? And if not, what is your plan to make sure that they have the ability to have a legal status, stay with their families, and ultimately contribute to the United States of America?

So we're going to have to keep on with the political process on a separate track. But in the meantime, we're going to do everything that we can to make sure that we implement executive actions as we've discussed.

U.S. District Court Opinion in Texas, et al. v. United States/President's Executive Actions on Immigration

Mr. Díaz-Balart. How long could this take? Because a lot of people are asking. They said, we were 24 hours away from registering for the expanded DACA and just months from DAPA. And this happens 12 hours before. What's going to happen now? How long is it going to take? And again, a lot of the questions are, was the President caught by surprise? And why is it taking so long? This is what we're getting, Mr. President.

The President. José——

Mr. Díaz-Balart. You know, because people are affected by this.

The President. What I'm saying is that of course, we weren't surprised. I've got a bunch of lawyers, we saw the judge who was rendering the opinion. The fact that we weren't surprised doesn't mean we can stop the judge from rendering an opinion. It means that we then go forward in the appeal process. That's how the legal system works.

And we have asked—first and foremost, we have asked for a stay. What a stay means, by the way, for the nonlawyers, is simply that whatever the judge thinks, it shouldn't stop us from going ahead and implementing. The first step is to go before that same judge and say: "Judge, what you said is wrong. Rethink it." He may not agree with that.

The next step is to go to a higher court, the Fifth Circuit. That will take a couple of months for us to file that and argue that before the Fifth Circuit. We expect to win in the Fifth Circuit, and if we don't, then we'll take it up from there.

So at each stage, we are confident that we've got the better argument. As I said before, what I've done is no different than what previous Presidents have done. In the meantime, what I can do is make sure——

Mr. Díaz-Balart. The numbers are unprecedented.

The President. Well, the numbers are unprecedented only relatively speaking. I mean, if you look at what George H.W.—George——

Mr. Díaz-Balart. H.W., yes.

The President. ——H.W. Bush did, he, proportionally to what was then the immigrant population, was very aggressive in expanding it. The difference is, is that Democrats didn't challenge what he did for largely political reasons.

Mr. Díaz-Balart. And there was a bill already underway.

The President. Well, there was a bill underway, but in some ways, you could make an argument that since a bill had passed that didn't solve that problem, Congress had been very direct in saying we don't want to solve that problem. And he went ahead and did it anyway, because it's in his authority to implement, using prosecutorial discretion, the limited resources of Department of Homeland Security.

So we're going to be in a position, I think, of going through the legal process over the next several months. In the meantime, what people who would qualify for executive action should be doing is gathering up your papers, making sure that you can show that you are a longstanding resident in the United States. You should be making sure that you've got the documents so that when we have cleared out all the legal problems and the application process is ready to go, that you're ready to go.

And we've got wonderful advocates who are working with us all across the country, in communities, the churches, civic groups and organizations, civil rights groups, lawyers, advocates. So the community right now, what they can do is prepare so that as soon as the legal process has worked themselves through, we can go forward.

Mr. Díaz-Balart. Mr. President, I want to introduce you to Boris Gills. He is a student here at Florida International University. Born in Haiti.

Q. Yes.

Mr. Díaz-Balart. Good afternoon.

International Students in the U.S.

Q. Hello, Mr. President. My name is Boris Gills, and I'm an international student. I came from Haiti. And I'm a survivor of the earthquake that badly ravaged my country in 2010. In 2011, I came here in the U.S. on a student visa. Now, I'm a senior at FIU. I'm graduating next semester with a double major in finance and international business. Like, so many of us, like, international students, we don't know what to do. Like, our back against the wall. Like, we're doing everything by the book, but yet it feels like we're left out of every single reforms, of everything going on. So now my question is, what is it that you can do to help us international student? Like, how can you include us in your Executive orders maybe?

The President. Well, let me just say this. The—it's wonderful to see people—young people, talent—from all across the globe coming to stay in the United States. And I want to congratulate Florida International for the diversity of its class and the great work that it's doing. And we would love more really well educated, ambitious young people to want to stay here and contribute to this country.

If you look at the history of the founders of Intel and Google and so many of our iconic companies, people like Albert Einstein, Alexander Graham Bell, they were immigrants. And one of the mistakes that we're making right now is, we're training a lot of incredibly talented young people, they're going to our universities, getting advanced degrees, and then we're sending them back right away, even though they may want to stay and start businesses here and contribute to our community.

So one of the things that we talked about in the comprehensive immigration bill was how can we provide greater incentives and opportunities for young people with great talent and higher degrees to be able to stay here, particularly in areas like math and science and technology, where we know that right now we don't have enough engineers, we don't have enough computer scientists.

But that is not something that we can do aggressively through executive actions. That's something that's going to require legislation for us to do. And frankly, there's going to be a—I want to be very clear: There are a lot of foreign students who come here to study. The fact that they come here to study doesn't automatically qualify them for legal residence or U.S. citizen-

ship. And I don't foresee a circumstance where suddenly, anybody who is going to college here automatically is qualified for legal residence. There will be criteria in terms of who it is that is able to apply, get legal residence, get a work permit, and maybe ultimately go through citizenship. But that's going to be through a legal process of legal immigration. That's not going to be one that is resolved with respect to somebody who has been undocumented. Those are two different circumstances.

And part of what we can do through the comprehensive immigration bill is speed up our legal immigration system. A lot of people end up being forced through the undocumented pool because the legal process is so bogged down, so bureaucratic, so slow, oftentimes, the allocations of quotas from different countries are—don't reflect the modern world. And so one of the things that the Senate bill originally did was really change that in a smart way, and it would have speeded things up. That's why we still have to get this bill passed, and we're still going to have to put pressure on it.

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Policy/President's Executive Actions on Immigration/International Students in the U.S.

Mr. Díaz-Balart. On a bigger question that, kind of, Boris brings up, to extrapolate his case, is some people wonder, well, are you focusing mostly on the undocumented population? And through Executive orders, could you not also include those that are here, that are participating already? Folks that came from Haiti, this horrible earthquake that hit 5 years, are you focused at all on that? I think——

The President. We are.

Mr. Díaz-Balart. ——Boris's question is, can't you include them as well to streamline in some way?

The President. Here's the thing. I was always very clear about this, even when I made the first announcement about the executive actions. The reason I'm confident about our legal position in what we did with DACA, which was already in place since 2012, what we're now proposing in terms of expanding DACA, and also for the parents of those who qualified for DACA—the reason I'm confident is that we could take those steps under my powers of prosecutorial discretion.

If in fact we were completely just rewriting the immigration laws, then actually, the other side would have a case, because we can't violate statutes. We can't violate laws that are already in place. What we can do is make choices to implement those laws. That's what we've done with DACA, and that's what we've proposed with the expansion of DACA and DAPA.

In order for us to do most of the work that Boris refers to in terms of expanding opportunities, for example, to say to any young person who has got an advanced degree in math and science and engineering, which we know we're going to need, even as we try to get more and more young Americans to go into those fields—in order for us to do that, we're going to need a congressional law to be passed. I don't have all the authorities that are necessary in order to get some of those things done.

Immigration Reform Efforts in the President's First Term

Mr. Díaz-Balart. Mr. President, I can't tell you the amount of questions that we've received, both on Telemundo and MSNBC, has really been extraordinary. And one I get a lot, over and over and over again, is a question, Mr. President, when you had absolute control of Congress, you really didn't fight for immigration. And then when you had the situation where you lost majorities, then you take action. Is there political implications behind something that affects so many people so close to their hearts?

The President. I don't know if anybody remembers, José, that when I took office and I had a majority, we had the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression. The global economy was collapsing. The unemployment rate in the Latino community and the immigrant community had soared. People were losing homes and entire communities were being devastated. So it wasn't as if I was just sitting back, not doing anything. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Díaz-Balart. No one says you were sitting back not doing anything, but you did do the ACA, for example.

The President. We were moving very aggressively on a whole host of issues. And we moved as fast as we could, and we wanted immigration done. We pushed for immigration to be done. But ultimately, we could not get the votes to get it all done.

Now, this is one of the challenges of being President, is, there are crying needs everywhere. Even within the Latino communities, even within the immigrant communities, there are crying needs. I don't regret having done the ACA. I just described for you, there are millions of people who are not going to go bankrupt because they got sick, because we got that done. So if the question is, would I have loved to have gotten everything done in the first 2 years—absolutely, because then, for the next 6, I could have relaxed. [*Laughter*]

But what we do is, we choose to push——

Mr. Díaz-Balart. Let me——

The President. ——as hard as we can on all fronts. Some things are politically easier. Some things are politically more difficult. Some things we're able to get done given the schedule in the Senate or in the House.

One of the biggest challenges that we've had on a lot of these issues was what's called the filibuster in the Senate. Even when we had a majority in the Senate, in order to get things passed, we had to get some Republican votes. And if it were not for that filibuster process where—by the way, it's not in the Constitution, but the habits in the Senate have gotten so bad where you've got to get 60 votes for everything. As a consequence of that, things like immigration reform, that if I had just needed a simple majority of Democrats we could have gotten done, we could not get done in those circumstances.

Immigration Reform Legislation

Mr. Díaz-Balart. And here's another social media question. Benson Owen from Houston says: "Why did Democrats and the GOP play political ping-pong with immigration when millions of American families suffer as a result?" [*Applause*]

The President. José, wait, wait, wait. I appreciate the applause. Let me just say, that's just not true, the notion that Democrats and Republicans played political ping-pong.

Democrats have consistently stood on the side of comprehensive immigration reform. Democrats have provided strong majorities across the board for comprehensive immigration reform. And you do a disservice when you suggest that, ah, nobody was focused on this, because then you don't know who's fighting for you and who's fighting against you.

And the fact of the matter is that the Democratic Party consistently has, in its platforms, in its conventions, has taken a strong stand that we need to fix a broken immigration system. And the blockage has been very specific on one side.

Now, to their credit, there are Republicans, a handful, who have agreed with us. That's how we got it passed through the Senate. But let's not be confused about why we don't have comprehensive immigration reform right now. It's very simple: The Republican Speaker of the House, John Boehner, refused to call the bill. Had he called the bill, the overwhelming majority of Democrats and a handful of Republicans would have provided a majority in order to get that done.

Mr. Díaz-Balart. Mr. President, I want to kind of—as I look out to the many folks that are here, there are so many DREAMers here. Astrid Silva is here. She has a family member in the process of deportation. You actually highlighted her case when you mentioned your executive action. Erika Andiola is here, and she has a question that many DREAMers have as well.

The President's Executive Actions on Immigration

Q. Hi, Mr. President. I'm a DREAMer from Arizona, the State where Sheriff Arpaio and ICE usually criminalizes our communities. And my sister is here who actually qualifies for DACA extended or would have qualified if it was implemented. And my mom is also here.

She was, unfortunately, left out of your executive actions, and she doesn't have any citizen children; she only has DREAMers as children. And she is also in deportation proceedings. And because of a previous deportation that she did have and came back for us, she's actually a priority in your deportation directive.

And so my question to you is, what's going to happen to my family? Given the fact that immigration reform, it's not going to happen any time soon, and we know that because of the politics in Congress, what's going to happen in the meantime with my mom and my family if Immigration comes to my house once again?

The President. Well, let me just say, I don't know, obviously, the details of every specific case, and I'm happy to have somebody look at the case that you just referred to and what's going on with your mom and your sister. What we've done is, we've expanded my authorities under executive action and prosecutorial discretion as far as we can legally under the existing statute, the existing law. And so now the question is, how can we get a law passed?

Now, that's heartbreaking, because it means that not everybody is immediately helped. But the fact of the matter is that until that law is changed, what we have to do is to prioritize under the existing law. And what we then have to do is try to get this legal case resolved.

But look, this is something that I wrestle with every single day, and that is that there are laws on the books that I think are counterproductive. I think there are laws on the books that I don't think are right in terms of making sure that America is strong. But I have to deal with a Congress that—a big part of which disagrees with me. I've got to deal with judges who may not have been appointed by me and have a different reading of the law. And so what we have to do is just keep on working.

But the one thing that I have to just say to everybody here: Every major social movement, every bit of progress in this country—whether it's been the workers' rights movement or the civil rights movement or the women's rights movement—every single bit of that progress has required us to fight and to push. And you make progress, and then part—you don't get everything right away, and then you push some more. And that's how the country continually gets better. Precisely because the stories of people like you, that then, hopefully, softens the hearts of people who right now are blocking us from solving some of these problems.

And that is going to be something that we just have to continue to work on. That's the nature of it.

Immigration Reform/Political Participation

[*Mr. Díaz-Balart asked a question in Spanish, which was translated by an interpreter as follows. The translation could not be verified because no audio of the translation was available.*]

Mr. Díaz-Balart. Mr. President, a lot of people ask themselves—and this is Astrid's case, and Erika's as well—a lot of DREAMers think the same way: If you have executive actions and judges have to determine at the end if they are legal or not, how come you don't include the parents, the parents of the DREAMers? If the judge says, well, that's not legal, I find it not constitutional, so then you deal with it. But please include them.

The President. Because the theory of prosecutorial discretion is that you have limited resources, and because of that, you can't apply the law of enforcement to everybody. But if I include everybody, then it's no longer prosecutorial discretion, then I'm just ignoring the law. And as I said before, then there really would be a strong basis to overturn everything that we've done.

So that's why ultimately the law itself is going to have to be changed. In the meantime, what we have to do is make sure that we're continually fighting to uphold what we've already done. I mean, we've got 800,000 people who are currently taking advantage of DACA, including the young woman who just spoke, from what I understand. And now we've got to get more. But ultimately, in order to make sure that we don't have any heartbreaking stories with respect to immigration, we're going to have to fix the law.

There are only so many shortcuts. Ultimately, we have to change the law. And people have to remain focused on that. And the way that happens is, by the way, by voting. I mean, I just have to say, in the last election—and I want to speak particularly to young people here—in the last election, a little over one-third of eligible voters voted. One-third.

Two-thirds of the people who had the right to vote—because of the struggles of previous generations, had the right to vote—stayed home. I'm willing to bet that there are young people who have family members who are at risk of the existing immigration system who still didn't vote.

Mr. Díaz-Balart. Mixed-status families. There are millions of them.

The President. Who still did not vote. And so my question, I think, to everybody, not just the immigrant community, but the country as a whole: Why are you staying at home? Why are you not participating? If you—there are war-torn countries, people full of poverty, who still vote at 60, 70 percent. If here in the United States of America, we voted at 60 percent, 70 percent, it would transform our politics. Our Congress would be completely different. We would have already passed comprehensive immigration reform. It would have already been done.

So I, as President, have the responsibility to set out a vision in terms of where we need to go. I have the responsibility to execute the laws faithfully, and that includes making sure that what's within my power, I am doing everything I can to make the immigration system smarter. But everybody here and everybody watching also has responsibilities. And one of those responsibilities is voting for people who advocate on behalf of the things that you care about.

And staying home is not an option. And being cynical is not an option. And just waiting for somebody else, whether it's the President or Congress or somebody—José—[*laughter*]—to get it done, that's not enough.

Immigration Reform/President's Accomplishments/Political Participation

[*Mr. Díaz-Balart asked a question in Spanish, which was translated by an interpreter as follows. The translation could not be verified because no audio of the translation was available.*]

Mr. Díaz-Balart. What happens, Mr. President, is some people see what's going on in Washington and they see that one party says something and the other party says something else, and they don't do what they say that they're going to be doing. Why am I—this is just a game.

The President. It's not a game. Wait, wait, wait——

[*Mr. Díaz-Balart continued in Spanish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows. The translation could not be verified because no audio of the translation was available.*]

Mr. Díaz-Balart. And that happens while people are being deported. Every day. More than 2 million people.

The President. José, let me tell you something. This is not a game.

[*Mr. Díaz-Balart spoke in English.*]

Mr. Díaz-Balart. No, I agree with you. But I'm telling you why people feel cynical.

The President. But they shouldn't feel that way, because all kinds of changes happen when people vote. There are people who have health insurance right now because somebody went out there and voted. There are people right now who had their homes saved—otherwise, they would have lost them—because people voted. There are people right now who are going to college because we were able to expand student aid and Pell grant programs. That happened because people voted. All kinds of changes have taken place over the last 6 years that have made this country better because people voted.

Now, the fact that we didn't get a hundred percent of what we want—you never get a hundred percent of what you want. You have to go out there and fight for the rest.

And we've made enormous progress, but we have more to do. And that's what I intend on doing in the remaining 2 years that I've got as President.

Immigration Reform Legislation/Former Governor John E. "Jeb" Bush of Florida/2016 Presidential Election/Political Participation

[*Mr. Díaz-Balart asked a question in Spanish, which was translated by an interpreter as follows. The translation could not be verified because no audio of the translation was available.*]

Mr. Díaz-Balart. I am very happy that we are discussing this political topic, Mr. President, because one of the main contenders for the 2016 elections is a former Governor from this particular State, Jeb Bush. He said last week that you overstepped your authority, and as a consequence, you hurt the effort to find a solution to the immigration problem, and all the affected families deserve something better.

No matter who wins the White House after the next elections in 2016, what's your main concern? Knowing that you won't be able to fix before you leave in regards to immigration, when you leave office, what would be the message for the next President that will be living in the White House after the 2016 elections?

[*Mr. Díaz-Balart spoke in English.*]

Mr. Díaz-Balart. I can do this in English.

The President. No, no, no.

Mr. Díaz-Balart. You've got it?

The President. I've got the translation. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Díaz-Balart. We're bilingual here. I'm bilingual.

The President. Well, let me make a couple of points. Number one, I haven't given up on passing it while I'm President. We're going to keep on pushing. And although, so far, the Republican Party has been pretty stubborn about this issue, if they start feeling enough pressure, that can make a difference. And so we just have to keep the pressure. Don't suddenly just let up, say, well, we've just got to wait for the next 2 years or we've got to wait for a judge. We've got to keep on putting pressure on Members of Congress, Republican and Democrat.

If there are Democrats out there who aren't on board on comprehensive immigration reform—although that's not the—the vast majority of Democrats are on board—but if there are some who aren't, go talk to them. Push them. I'm not going to just stand still over the next 2 years. We're going to keep on trying to get something done. So that's point number one.

Point number two: I appreciate Mr. Bush being concerned about immigration reform. I would suggest that what he do is talk to the Speaker of the House and the members of his party. Because the fact of the matter is that even after we passed bipartisan legislation in the Senate, I gave the Republicans a year and a half—a year and a half—to just call the bill. We had the votes. They wouldn't do it. And then, the notion that, well, if you just hadn't taken these executive actions, if you hadn't done DACA, maybe we would have voted for it—well, that doesn't make any sense. That's an excuse.

Mr. Díaz-Balart. Yes, but they're saying——

The President. So that's an excuse. Now, let me get to the broader question that you asked, which is, what would I ask for the next President of the United States? One of the things I've learned in this position is that as the only office in which you are the President of all the people, not just some, you have to be thinking not just in terms of short-term politics, you have to be thinking about what's good for the country over the long term.

Now, over the long term, this is going to get solved, because at some point, there's going to be a President Rodriguez, or there's going to be a President Chin, or there's going to be a—the country is a nation of immigrants, and ultimately, it will reflect who we are, and its politics will reflect who we are. And that's not something to be afraid of. That's something to welcome. Because that's always been how we stay dynamic and stay cutting edge and have energy and we're youthful.

So what I would say to the next President is: Think ahead. Don't say something short term because you think it's politically convenient and then box yourself in where you can't do what's right for the country. Think long term.

And what I—what we know is, long term, if you pass a broad-based, thoughtful, comprehensive immigration reform that makes the legal system smoother, that invites talented young people to stay here and work and invest and start businesses; if we provide a pathway to citizenship for those who have been here a long time; if we strengthen our borders; if we make sure that we're saying to companies, don't take advantage of undocumented workers by not paying them overtime, not paying them minimum wage—if we do all those things, we know the deficit will go down, economic growth will go up. We know that we can then really concentrate our resources effectively on our national security.

Every economist who's looked at this says it's the right thing to do. The vast majority of businesses recognize it's the right thing to do. So think ahead. That's what I'd say to the next President of the United States.

And if you hear people during the course of the future campaigns, over the next several months and into next year, if all they're doing is demagoguing, if all they're saying is, "We have to do something about these illegal immigrants," but then, when you ask them, "Okay, what is it that you want to do?" then they don't have a good answer, or they pretend that we're going to somehow deport 11 million people, even though everybody knows that the economies of Miami, New York, Chicago, the entire Central Valley in California would collapse, so they're not being serious about it—if you hear people not being serious and not being honest about these issues, then you've got to call them on it.

But they'll ignore you if they don't think you're voting.

And so it doesn't do any good to push candidates, but not then back it up with action. And the action, ultimately, is going to be getting engaged and involved in the political process. The people who are least likely to vote are young people. So, young people, you need to think ahead too. When we work on these issues, most of us—I'm going to include José——

Mr. Díaz-Balart. No, you can say it.

The President. ——in the category of being old.

Mr. Díaz-Balart. We're the same age. And I just look younger than you, but——

The President. He looks a little better because I don't dye my hair. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Díaz-Balart. I know.

The President. I'm messing with him.

Mr. Díaz-Balart. It's called the Obama.

The President. No, no, man, that's natural, that's natural. [*Laughter*]

But the fact is, is that we're going to be okay. The question is, what's happening for the next generation? You have to vote. You have to get involved now. Even if everything seems like it's okay for you now, you've got to be thinking about the future.

And that's part of what has always been the great strength of America—we dream about the future. That's what brings immigrants here, is we're future oriented, we're not past oriented. The people who are interested in looking backwards, they stay where they are. They're comfortable. They don't want change. Even if there's an earthquake in Haiti, they still stay where they are. Even if there's poverty where they live, they stay where they are. Even if their religious faith is being discriminated again, they stay where they are.

But if you come to America, it's because you believe in the future, and that has to be reflected in our politics.

Mr. Díaz-Balart. Señor Presidente, gracias.

The President. Muchas gracias. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4 p.m. at Florida International University. In his remarks, he referred to Andrew S. Hanen, judge, U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Texas; Esther Alvarado, mother of U.S. Army veteran Eric Narvaez Alvarado; former President George H.W. Bush; Andrew S. Grove, cofounder and former chief executive officer, Intel; and Sergey M. Brin, cofounder and former

president, Google Inc. In his remarks, Mr. Díaz-Balart referred to Maria Arreola, mother of Dream Action Coalition Codirector Erika Andiola.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Cuba and of the Emergency Authority Relating to the Regulation of the Anchorage and Movement of Vessels
February 25, 2015

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent the enclosed notice to the *Federal Register* for publication, stating that the national emergency declared on March 1, 1996, with respect to the Government of Cuba's destruction of two unarmed U.S.-registered civilian aircraft in international airspace north of Cuba on February 24, 1996, as amended and expanded on February 26, 2004, is to continue in effect beyond March 1, 2015.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
February 25, 2015.

NOTE: The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks at an African American History Month Reception
February 26, 2015

The President. All righty. Hello, everybody!

Audience members. Hello!

The President. Welcome to the White House. I want to thank Saheela for the wonderful introduction. In case you all did not hear properly——

The First Lady. You can say it again. Repeat it one more time.

The President. I'm just going to repeat this just so you understand.

The First Lady. All right, let's listen up.

The President. Saheela got into Harvard at 15.

The First Lady. Yes, she didn't mention that.

The President. I don't know what you all were doing at 15. [*Laughter*] Speaks four languages. The Arabic is like a major or minor, but has four of them. Is studying neurobiology. Was listed among the "World's 50 Smartest Teenagers." Now—Michelle is, like, "Mmm." [*Laughter*]

The First Lady. It is. It's just like, "Mmm, mmm, mmm."

The President. Let me just say, there are a lot of teenagers in the world. [*Laughter*]

The First Lady. Yes.

The President. So if you're, like, one of the 50 smartest ones, that's pretty smart. And she's a wonderful young lady. I mean, she's like the State Department and the National Institute of Health all rolled into one. [*Laughter*] And we are so proud of your accomplishments and all that lies ahead for you. And you reflect our history. Young people like this inspire our future.

And give a big round of applause to her mom who is here.

The First Lady. Right there.

The President. Mom is just filming the whole thing.

The First Lady. We see you! You're right there!

The President. We can't even see her because she's got her iPad in front of her.

[*Laughter*] Nothing like bragging about somebody's children. [*Laughter*]

We are joined this evening by Members of Congress, including Leader Nancy Pelosi; members of the Congressional Black Caucus. I want to congratulate the Association for the Study of African American Life and History—which is the group that gave us Black History Month—on your centennial. Give them a big round of applause.

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]

The President. All right, that guy, don't get carried away now. [*Laughter*]

The First Lady. He can get carried away.

The President. I don't know, he was—[*laughter*].

Now, as always, this month is a chance to celebrate the central role that African Americans have played in every aspect of American life: marching for freedom and equality, jobs and justice; making a profound contribution to our culture. And here at the White House, we're committed to honoring that legacy. Earlier this month, for example, we opened up the newly restored Old Family Dining Room to the public for the first time, and it now includes a painting by Alma Thomas called "Resurrection." And that's the first in the White House Collection by an African American woman. Michelle made that happen, and we could not be prouder of her for that.

You don't get carried away either, dear. [*Laughter*]

But for the past couple of years, we've also been marking important milestones in that journey: the 50th anniversary of the Civil Rights Act, the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington, the 50th anniversary this year of the Voting Rights Act.

Next week, Michelle and I and the girls will be traveling to Selma to pay tribute—not just as a President or a First Lady or as African Americans, but as Americans—to those who changed the course of history at the Edmund Pettus Bridge. Not just the legends and the giants of the civil rights movement like Dr. King and John Lewis, but the countless American heroes whose names aren't in the history books, that aren't etched on marble somewhere; ordinary men and women from all corners of this Nation, all walks of life, Black and White, rich and poor, students, scholars, maids, ministers, all who marched and who sang and organized to change this country for the better.

We happen to be blessed to have some of those foot soldiers for justice here today, folks like Ms. Mattie Atkins. Ms. Mattie Atkins, wave just a little bit. She's right here. Early in 1965, Mattie—who was just 27 years old, mother of five—joined with others in her community to march around the Marion Courthouse for their right to vote. And tensions ran high. The threat of violence mounted. But at night, the protesters would gather in a church and resolve to come back the next day.

And Ms. Atkins remembers the terrible violence on the night protesters tried to march to the jail, the night that Jimmie Lee Jackson was shot. Ms. Atkins remembers running into the church for safety, wiping the blood from the face of a fellow protester, and then going home to her children who were sleeping safe and sound in their beds.

And she still went back the next day, because despite the doubts and the fears, she knew that she was doing the right thing for her children and their future. And Ms. Atkins went on to help register folks to vote. She ran for office herself, became the first woman elected to her local school board in Perry County.

Next week, the world will turn its eyes to Selma again. And when it does, I want everyone to remember that it was because of people like Ms. Atkins and all the others who are here today that we celebrate. But they also remind us, they stand as testimonials to the fact that one day a year is not enough to honor the kind of courage that they showed. One month a year is not sufficient to take on their example and to celebrate the power of a movement. That's something that we have to do, each and every one of us, every day, living up to their example, then handing it on to our children and our children's children.

And today, on the third anniversary of Trayvon Martin's death, showing all of our kids—all of them—every single day that their lives mat-

ter, that's part of our task. I want to thank Trayvon's parents for being here on what's a very difficult day for them.

It takes all of us to show our young people, as Ms. Atkins puts it, that "where we are today didn't come easy, it came through thick and thin." "That's what I tell my children," she says, "to stand up for what's right." It's a simple thing to say; sometimes, it's hard to do. But progress in this Nation happens only because seemingly ordinary people find the courage to stand up for what is right. Not just when it's easy, but when it's hard. Not just when it's convenient, but when it's challenging.

We don't set aside this month each year to isolate or segregate or put under a glass case Black history. We set it aside to illuminate those threads, those living threads that African Americans have woven into the tight tapestry of this Nation to make it stronger and more beautiful and more just and more free.

What happened in Selma is quintessentially an American experience, not just an African American experience. It speaks to what's best in this country. It reminds us that the history of America doesn't belong to one group or another, it belongs to all of us; that idea, this experiment built on a shared story of people bound together by shared ideas, shared ideals, certain inalienable rights of equality and justice and liberty for all people.

So I want to thank those who made that extraordinary contribution for setting such a wonderful example for each of us. And I know that when I take Malia and Sasha down with Michelle next week, down to Selma, part of what I'm hoping to do is to remind them of their own obligations. Because there are going to be marches for them to march and struggles for them to fight. And if we've done our job, then that next generation is going to be picking up the torch as well.

All right? Thank you, everybody. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:38 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Saheela Ibraheem, student, Harvard University, and her mother Shakirat Ibraheem; and Tracy Martin and Sybrina Fulton, parents of Trayvon Martin, who was killed in Sanford, FL, on February 26, 2012.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia
February 27, 2015

President Obama. It's a great pleasure to welcome once again the President of Liberia, President Sirleaf. She has been a great friend and ally of the United States. And Liberia and the United States obviously have an extraordinary bond and extraordinary history.

President Sirleaf came into office under some of the most challenging of circumstances. After a brutal civil war, she has worked steadily to solidify democracy, to reduce corruption, to deliver basic services to a very poor country. And she's done so with grace and steadiness and reached out to all the people of Liberia.

Last year proved to be an extraordinarily difficult challenge. Because of the Ebola crisis, we saw the kind of death and disruption of an entire country and entire region of the sort that we haven't seen very often in modern history. I want to express my deepest condolences to the thousands who died from this deadly disease. Their families obviously continue to grieve.

But what is extraordinary is, because of President Sirleaf's leadership, because of the heroism of so many people in Liberia, and because of the actions of the United States and ultimately the international community, we have made extraordinary strides in driving back Ebola. Cases are now down 95 percent from their peak. We just have a handful of cases that come up per week.

Our job is not yet done, and neighboring countries like Guinea and Sierra Leone are still somewhat behind the progress that's been made in Liberia. But because of the extraordinary courage of health workers and community leaders and President Sirleaf and her administration, what could have been an even more

devastating crisis has been brought under control.

And I am very proud of the participation of the United States. Our men and women in uniform who helped to set up the logistical capacity to absorb additional aid and health workers from around the world, our ability to set up labs and provide technical assistance that allowed Liberian health workers and other international partners to go in and do the contact tracing and to establish the safe burial practices and raise community awareness and to provide more humane treatment—all those things have contributed to confidence that we're going to be able to stamp out this disease completely.

And in the meantime, normal life is beginning to return to Liberia. Children are beginning to go back to school. People are beginning to go back to soccer matches. Businesses have reopened. And the flow and rhythm of normal life has begun to return.

So we are very proud of what Liberia has accomplished, and we've been very proud to be partners with Liberia in that process.

The meeting today will obviously discuss how we make sure that we're not complacent so long as there's even one case of Ebola remaining in West Africa. But we're now also in a position to look towards the future. This has had a devastating economic impact, not surprisingly, on Liberia. And so we're going to have to work with President Sirleaf to find ways to strengthen the economy: to rebuild infrastructure, to make sure that some of the development goals that had been set previously are accelerated, to deal with some of the economic contraction. It requires us to—and others in the international community to—work with our West Africa partners to ensure that growth returns to Liberia.

Those are all areas where we're very interested to hear how we can be helpful. We've got some ideas as well. In the meantime, on programs—everything from our Millennial Challenge grants to encouraging international investment, to the return of Peace Corps volunteers—we want to accelerate as much as possible a return to Liberian growth and development, to accelerate some of the efforts that President Sirleaf had already begun to reduce corruption, and to make sure that prosperity and growth is broad based, not just in Monrovia, but throughout rural areas. That's the kind of partnership that we're looking forward to, and we could not have a better partner than President Sirleaf.

So we thank you so much for your leadership. We're very proud of the work that we've done with you. We know that the job is not yet done, but it shows what can be accomplished when you've got strong, democratic leaders on the ground and international partners who are ready to join in dealing with some of the toughest challenges that any country has ever faced.

President Johnson Sirleaf. Mr. President, I thank you for your kind words. We've come to express, on behalf of the Liberian people, to you, to the Congress, to all the entities, what we call the frontline responders, to faith-based institutions, to the American people in general, for the support we received as we fought this virus.

We want to really recognize the extraordinary leadership that you provided. We recall when the U.N. Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, called for a global meeting to discuss this disease, one which we said was the most threatening to global peace, you were there. And you gave the clarion call to the global community to see the threat this disease represented. And as a result of that, the support that came from U.S. entities was then supplemented by so many others around the world.

We know that there was fear in this country, and we understood that because we were fearful ourselves. We didn't know how to confront this unknown enemy. And we know that there was some pressure here to be able to stop any traveling of people from Liberia or from the other affected countries. But we want to thank you for standing firm in resisting that pressure and rallying the American people to see this for what it was and to join partnership with Liberia and others to be able to confront it.

We also thank you for the military. We know that this may not have been welcomed by many, or by some. But that made a critical dif-

ference in sending a strong message to the Liberian people that the United States was with us. And the military not only braced the confidence and the motivation of the Liberian people to save themselves, but also left behind a very permanent contribution, because they worked with our military, and as a result of that, today our military can go out and they can build those structures, health treatment centers, because of their association and their work with the U.S. military.

As you correctly pointed out, even though 13 of our 15 political subdivisions have now zero—no new cases, and even though we feel confident that we're getting to the place where we can really say we can confront and we can beat this disease, but we know we're not there yet. We're not there because we are still in the region where there are a few other affected countries, two others. They have not reached the level of success and progress that we have. But we know that we all remain under threat until all of us have reached a place where we get to zero. And so we have to remain resilient.

We'd like to see a regional approach for the protection of our borders, to be able to monitor and to manage cross-border travel in our long and porous borders. We'd like to see the partnership continue as we move toward rebuilding our health infrastructure.

We today have had some meetings, and today we remain confident. And you know, Mr. President, the one critical element in all of this was our people, particularly our community people. They took charge. They said, we're not going to die. We're not going to lose our livelihoods. We're not going to reverse the gains that we have made over the past 10 years, 10 consecutive years of peace. And so we're going to—so they got the support from you, they got the support from the U.S. entities, and they got the support from the international community. But they took responsibility, they took leadership, they took ownership.

And going forward, we want to strengthen that. We do not want to lose that motivation and capacity. We want to see them now apply it, post-Ebola, to be able to accelerate our own development agenda.

So again, Mr. President, our message—my team that's here with me and the Liberian people—is to come and say to the American people, to the U.S. Congress who supported your program—in a bipartisan way, I might say—to say to you that your support, your partnership has worked. We see it as a success story, even though we've got a lot of more work to do. But the basic word is, we're here to thank you.

President Obama. Thank you, Madam President. Appreciate it. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:37 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Remarks on the Unveiling of the Official Portrait of Attorney General Eric H. Holder, Jr.
February 27, 2015

The President. Hello, everybody! Thank you. Please, please, everybody have a seat. I think it's important to point out, first of all, that Eric has more gray hair than that. [*Laughter*] Clearly, he posed early in his tenure. [*Laughter*] But it's a remarkable likeness, a wonderful portrait. I am thrilled to be here, despite the fact that Eric is really just milking this departure thing—[*laughter*]—for everything that it's worth. I mean, golly. [*Laughter*]

I'm thrilled to be at DOJ with all of you today to celebrate a great friend and a great public servant, somebody who's led this department with integrity and, along with all of you, made our Nation more free and more just: our Attorney General, Eric Holder.

Now, in September, when Eric and I stood together at the White House and announced that he'd be leaving the Justice Department, he thanked all of you for joining him on a journey that, in his words, "will always be guided

by the pursuit of justice and aimed at the north star." And that sums up Eric's career. A life guided by justice, aimed at his north star: his bedrock belief in the fundamental rights and equality of all people.

It's the principle that shaped his career, from his early days as a Federal prosecutor through his years on the bench, his previous turns at the Justice Department as a Deputy Attorney General and Acting Attorney General, and finally, his exemplary service as 82d Attorney General of the United States.

Eric is America's third-longest serving Attorney General. I know it felt even longer. [*Laughter*] And I'll just come out and say it: He has been one of our finest: hundreds of terrorism convictions, the largest Mafia takedown in history, billion-dollar financial fraud cases, long-overdue reforms to our criminal justice system. Thanks in part to Eric's leadership, the overall crime rate and overall incarceration rate declined together for the first time in 40 years last year.

And then, there's all that Eric has done to restore what he calls the "conscience" of the Nation, our Civil Rights Division. And as many of you know, Eric has a personal connection to that office. When Nicholas Katzenbach was Deputy Attorney General during the Kennedy administration, he escorted two African American students through the doors of the University of Alabama after the courts ordered that school to be desegregated. And one of those students happened to be a young woman named Vivian Malone. And her younger sister Sharon eventually became an accomplished and renowned doctor and married a promising young lawyer, somewhat below her standards—[*laughter*]—named Eric Holder. So if you've ever wondered why Eric has Katzenbach's portrait hanging in his office, that's why.

Under Eric's watch, this Department has relentlessly defended the Voting Rights Act and the right to vote, pushed back against attempts to undermine that right. He's challenged discriminatory State immigration laws that not only risked harassment of citizens and legal immigrants, but actually made it harder for law enforcement to do their job. He's brought record number of prosecutions for human trafficking and hate crimes and resolution to legal disputes with Native Americans that had languished for years.

Several years ago, Eric recommended that our Government stop defending the Defense of Marriage Act, because he wants our country to be a place where love is love and where same-sex marriage is recognized on the Federal level and same-sex couples can receive the same Federal benefits as anybody else.

With Eric Holder as its lawyer, America has become a better country, which means that saying goodbye is bittersweet. You have done a remarkable job. It's hard to let you go. I tried to talk him out of it. [*Laughter*] But he's earned a break. And Sharon and Brooke and Maya and Buddy, they've waited a pretty long time to get you back.

Now, Eric promised to stay on until the Senate confirms his successor. And just yesterday the Senate Judiciary Committee approved Loretta Lynch to be the next Attorney General. Once the entire Senate confirms her and she's finally allowed to get to work, I know that she is going to do a superb job. And, Eric, that means that you're leaving the Justice Department in outstanding hands.

Let me close by saying that you don't have to take my word that Eric has made a difference in the life of this country. We collected just a few samples of the letters that were written during the course of the Presidency or after the announcement that Eric was leaving.

"Never in my lifetime," read one letter from an older American in Michigan, "can I remember any Attorney General of the United States that has done so much for our country and all its citizens."

A woman in California wrote: "Eric Holder was the best U.S. Attorney General ever. When people complain about you, that means you're doing something right." [*Laughter*] "He will truly be missed."

A Kentucky man wrote to say: "We thank you, Mr. Holder, for your unwavering passion in pursuit of your honorable vision. You made a difference. [You are] much more than simply a

public official. [You are] a servant, possessing a heart with the audacity to care."

And I'll provide one last testimony from today, not in written form. Working with Eric in the wake of the Trayvon Martin case, we initiated something called "My Brother's Keeper." And we're trying to reach out to young people all across the country who may not have all the advantages, may sometimes be subject to stereotypes, trying to give them pathways for success.

And as part of this, we had a group of young men, African American and Latino, who are White House mentees drawn from this local area. And today we had dinner—or lunch. Broderick was there. And we sat down and I explained to them that they don't have to be that tense about which fork to use, you kind of work your way in—[*laughter*]—that when I had dinner with the Queen of England, I seemed to do okay with just that basic rule and not eating with my mouth open. [*Laughter*]

And we went around the room, and they talked about their hopes and their aspirations and what colleges they had gone to and what they were doing. And there were a couple of outstanding football players in the group and a track star and a number of future neurobiologists and several who are planning to join our Armed Forces. And this one young man, who had a, at the moment, disqualifying haircut—[*laughter*]—said, "I want to be the Attorney General of the United States." Didn't say he wanted to be Governor or a Senator or a Congressman or even President. He said, "I want to be the Attorney General of the United States."

And I think about all the young people out there who have seen you work and have been able to get just an innate sense, without knowing you personally, that you're a good man. And having good men in positions of power and authority, who are willing to fight for what's right, that's a rare thing. That's a powerful thing. It's something that shapes our future in ways we don't even understand, we don't always imagine. It made me very proud.

So, Eric, your country thanks you for your honorable vision and your unwavering passion and, as the gentleman from Kentucky said, your audacity to care. Michelle and I thank you for being a friend and partner throughout this incredible journey.

And to all the men and women of the Department of Justice, thank you for your extraordinary service on behalf of the American people.

With that, it's my pleasure to introduce my friend, Attorney General Eric Holder.

Attorney General Holder. Thank you. Before I begin my remarks, I want to do something that's pretty risky, which is to recognize somebody—at the risk of not recognizing a whole bunch of other people—to whom I owe so much: Senator Patrick Leahy is here. And in tough times, both professional and personal, this is a man who has been there for me. He is a patriot in the truest sense of the word. This country is better for the work that you have done as a Senator, generally, and more specifically, when you chaired the Judiciary Committee.

I learned a lot from you. The relationship that we have will continue beyond my time here at the Justice Department. And at least for today—and he'll understand what I mean by this—at least for today, you are the real Patrick. [*Laughter*] Ask him about that.

I came to this Department as an unformed, 25-year-old graduate from law school. I will leave grayer and wiser, but still struck by the wonder of all that this great organization and its people have exposed me to. I have made friends during my time here and lost some of them to the vagaries of life. But each of those people has left an indelible mark on who I am and who I still aspire to be.

The beauty of this Department is that, at its best, it is like our country at its best: always growing, always changing, always being vigilant in the defense of those values that have distinguished this Nation and made it truly exceptional. This quality is derived from the ideals that serve as the foundation for all that we love about America.

Great as it is, our Nation is not yet perfect. The fact that we can acknowledge this is what truly distinguishes us as a people. We have

always examined ourselves and determined that which needs to be improved, that which needs to be maintained, and that to which we should aspire. This is the essence of and the beauty of the United States of America. Unlike other countries, complacent in an older, sclerotic system, we are still young, dynamic, and unafraid to question ourselves.

This spirit initially led to revolution and then to the removal of the sin of slavery, the right of women to vote, a great civil rights movement that truly transformed our Nation, and now a recognition of the rights of all Americans regardless of their sexual orientation.

And make no mistake: We still have unfinished business and work to do. Reform of our criminal justice system must continue. And under Loretta and Sally, I'm sure that will be the case. The historic wrongs visited upon our Native people must be righted. The widening gap in income inequality must be reversed. And in the defense of our Nation, we must always adhere—always adhere—to the values that define us. And at all costs—all costs—the right to vote must be protected.

Now, that list may seem daunting. But if we are true to who we are as Americans, no problem is too big, no issue insurmountable. And beware those who would take us back to a past that has really never existed or that was imbued with a forgotten inequity. Our destiny as Americans is always ahead of us. Our gaze is always focused on the horizon.

Those who have loved this Nation most have dared greatly and have sought to change the status quo for the better. The Founding Fathers, who—never let it be forgotten—they chose revolution rather than accept an unjust status quo. Lincoln, Frederick Douglass, Teddy Roosevelt, FDR, Garvey, Susan B. Anthony, Margaret Sanger, Jackie Robinson and Branch Rickey, John Lewis and Dr. King, JFK and LBJ, Vivian Malone, Harvey Milk, Barack Obama.

We should not fear change. It is part of who we are as Americans. It is what distinguishes us. It is what makes us unique.

Now, I leave this place proud of what we have accomplished over the last 6 years and grateful for all that DOJ has given me these past 39 years. This has been my home, and you will always be my family.

I thank the parents who raised me and the West Indian sensibility that they instilled in me, the New York City public school system that educated me, Columbia University that nurtured—and tolerated—me. [*Laughter*] The woman who has loved me so long. The kids who have been the joy and, I hope that they really understand, the true pride—the true pride—of my life. A brother who has been more than a sibling, he has been a dear friend. Beautiful sisters-in-law; a brilliant brother-in-law. The guys at the Colum—the guys at the Colum—you know who you are. And my crew from 24th Avenue and 101st Street.

And more recently, a President and colleagues in this administration who stuck by me when I didn't always make it the easiest thing to do. I'm grateful to this great Nation, who gave a Black kid from East Elmhurst, Queens, New York City, more support and opportunities than any individual could have hoped for. Thank you, America.

To the wonderful, dedicated, accomplished men and women of this great Department: I realize that I've asked for so much from each of you over the last 6 years. But let me make one final request: Keep going, keep fighting, keep believing in your ability to improve our country and our world. And know this—know this: No Attorney General, no AG has ever loved this institution or you more. Not one.

Now, I lack the words to fully convey what this place and all of you mean to me. So let me end this way, and paraphrase Duke Ellington: I will miss you as I have loved you all—madly. I love you madly.

Thank you, and goodbye.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:46 p.m. at the Department of Justice. In his remarks, he referred to Sharon D. Malone, wife, and Brooke Holder, Maya Holder, and Eric "Buddy" Holder III, children, of Attorney General Holder; and Cabinet Secretary Broderick D. Johnson. Attorney General Holder referred to Deputy

Attorney General-designate Sally Quillian Yates; his brother William Holder; and his sisters-in-law Deborah Holder, Margie Malone Tuckson, Joyce Phillips, and Gwen Moseby.

Statement on the Death of Theodore M. Hesburgh
February 27, 2015

Michelle and I were saddened to learn of the passing of Father Ted Hesburgh. During his lifetime of service to his country, his church, and his beloved University of Notre Dame, Father Hesburgh inspired generations of young men and women to lead with the courage of their convictions. His deep and abiding faith in a loving God and in the power of our shared humanity led him to join the first-ever United States Civil Rights Commission and join hands with Dr. King to sing "We Shall Overcome." His belief that what unites us is greater than what divides us made him a champion of academic freedom and open debate.

When I delivered the commencement address at Notre Dame in 2009, I was honored to thank Father Hesburgh for his contributions to our country and our world. Father Hesburgh often spoke of his beloved university as both a lighthouse and a crossroads: the lighthouse standing apart, shining with the wisdom of the Catholic tradition; and the crossroads joining the differences of culture, religion, and conviction with friendship, civility, and love. The same can be said of the man generations of students knew simply as Father Ted. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family, his friends, and the Notre Dame community that loved him so dearly.

Statement on the Death of Leonard S. Nimoy
February 27, 2015

Long before being nerdy was cool, there was Leonard Nimoy. Leonard was a lifelong lover of the arts and humanities, a supporter of the sciences, generous with his talent and his time. And of course, Leonard was Spock: cool, logical, big eared, and level headed, the center of Star Trek's optimistic, inclusive vision of humanity's future. I loved Spock.

In 2007, I had the chance to meet Leonard in person. It was only logical to greet him with the Vulcan salute, the universal sign for "Live long and prosper." And after 83 years on this planet—and on his visits to many others—it's clear Leonard Nimoy did just that. Michelle and I join his family, friends, and countless fans who miss him so dearly today.

Statement on the Death of Boris Efimovich Nemtsov
February 27, 2015

The United States condemns the brutal murder of Boris Nemtsov. And we call upon the Russian Government to conduct a prompt, impartial, and transparent investigation into the circumstances of his murder and ensure that those responsible for this vicious killing are brought to justice.

Nemtsov was a tireless advocate for his country, seeking for his fellow Russian citizens the rights to which all people are entitled. I admired Nemtsov's courageous dedication to the struggle against corruption in Russia and appreciated his willingness to share his candid views with me when we met in Moscow in 2009.

We offer our sincere condolences to Boris Efimovich's family and to the Russian people, who have lost one of the most dedicated and eloquent defenders of their rights.

The President's Weekly Address
February 28, 2015

Hi, everybody. In America, we believe that a lifetime of hard work and responsibility should be rewarded with a shot at a secure, dignified retirement. It's one of the critical components of middle class life, and this week, I took new steps to protect it.

Six years after the crisis that shook a lot of people's faith in a secure retirement, our economy is steadily growing. Last year was the best year for job growth since the 1990s. All told, over the past 5 years, the private sector has added nearly 12 million new jobs. And since I took office, the stock market has more than doubled, replenishing the 401(k)s of millions of families.

But while we've come a long way, we've got more work to do to make sure that our recovery reaches more Americans, not just those at the top. That's what middle class economics is all about: the idea that this country does best when everyone gets their fair shot, everybody does their fair share, and everyone plays by the same set of rules.

That last part—making sure everyone plays by the same set of rules—is why we passed historic Wall Street reform and a credit card bill of rights. It's why we created a new consumer watchdog agency. And it's why we're taking new action to protect hard-working families' retirement security. If you're working hard and putting away money, you should have the peace of mind that the financial advice you're getting is sound and that your investments are protected.

But right now there are no rules of the road. Many financial advisers put their clients' interest first, but some financial advisers get backdoor payments and hidden fees in exchange for steering people into bad investments. All told, bad advice that results from these conflicts of interest costs middle class families and working families about $17 billion every year.

So this week, I called on the Department of Labor to change that, to update the rules and require that retirement advisers put the best interests of their clients above their own financial interests. Middle class families cannot afford to lose their hard-earned savings after a lifetime of work. They deserve to be treated with fairness and respect. And that's what this rule would do.

While many financial advisers support these basic safeguards to prevent abuse, I know some special interests will fight this with everything they've got. But while we welcome different perspectives and ideas on how to move forward, what I won't accept is the notion that there's nothing we can do to make sure that hard-working, responsible Americans who scrimp and save can retire with security and dignity.

We're going to keep pushing for this rule, because it's the right thing to do for our workers and for our country. After all, the strength of our economy rests on whether hard-working families can not only share in America's success, but can also contribute to America's success. And that's what I will never stop fighting for: an economy where everyone who works hard has the chance to get ahead.

Thanks, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 2:55 p.m. on February 27 in the Library at the White House for broadcast on February 28. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 27, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on February 28.

Statement on the Death of Minnie Minoso
March 1, 2015

For South Siders and Sox fans all across the country, including me, Minnie Minoso is and will always be "Mr. White Sox."

The first Black Major Leaguer in Chicago, Minnie came to the United States from Cuba even though he could have made more money elsewhere. He came up through the Negro Leagues and didn't speak much English at first. And as he helped to integrate baseball in the 1950s, he was a target of racial slurs from fans and opponents, sometimes forced to stay in different motels from his teammates. But his speed, his power, and his resilient optimism earned him multiple All-Star appearances and Gold Gloves in left field, and he became one of the most dominant and dynamic players of the 1950s.

Minnie may have been passed over by the Baseball Hall of Fame during his lifetime, but for me and for generations of Black and Latino young people, Minnie's quintessentially American story embodies far more than a plaque ever could.

Michelle and I send our thoughts and prayers to his family and fans in Chicago, Cleveland, and around the world.

Remarks Following a Meeting With the President's Task Force on 21st-Century Policing and an Exchange With Reporters
March 2, 2015

The President. Last year, the events in Ferguson and New York exposed a deep-rooted frustration in many communities of color around the need for fair and just law enforcement. And so back in December, I announced a Task Force on 21st-Century Policing, chaired by two outstanding leaders who are respected both in law enforcement and in civil rights circles: Philadelphia Police Commissioner Charles Ramsey and former Assistant Attorney General Laurie Robinson. And I asked them to help to form a Task Force made up of community leaders, law enforcement leaders, academics, practitioners, and to come up in 90 days with a very specific set of recommendations that would allow us to continue to drive crime down, to continue to deal with issues of community building, but would begin to build the kind of trust that we need in order to continue to make progress in the future.

For the last few months, they've been holding hearings. They met with people who care passionately about these issues. They've debated recommendations thoughtfully and deliberately. Some put their lives on hold for more than 2 months to do this. I am extraordinarily grateful for their efforts.

This morning they presented to me their report, which will be available online for everybody to see. It offers pragmatic, commonsense ideas based on input from criminal justice experts, community leaders, law enforcement, and civil liberties advocates. We are carefully reviewing all their recommendations, which include very specific recommendations, more general recommendations, everything from training issues to technology issues, to approaches for interacting with schools, to how we get research and data. But I want to summarize just a few key points that were made so that people are very clear about the direction that we're going to be moving.

Number one, I think uniformly, the Task Force talked about the issue of legitimacy as being important not just for the communities, but also for law enforcement officers. That the more there is trust between communities and law enforcement, the safer it is for cops, the more effectively they can do their jobs, the more cooperation there's going to be, the more likely those communities are to be safe. And so there is no theoretical separation between the interests of community and law enforcement.

But obviously, the devil is in the details, and we've got to figure out how to make that work.

Number two, there was a great emphasis on the need to collect more data. Across this country, we've got 18,000 law enforcement jurisdictions. Right now we do not have a good sense, and local communities do not have a good sense, of how frequently there may be interactions with police and community members that result in a death, result in a shooting. That's the kind of information that is needed for police departments to do their job, to be able to manage their forces effectively, and for communities to be able to evaluate and provide appropriate oversight to the folks who are supposed to be serving and protecting them.

There was a lot of discussion about the need for expanding and enhancing community policing that we know works. When I had several law enforcement officers from around the country the other day, almost all of them—and this is a diverse group, some from big cities, some from small communities, some from tribal areas—they all discussed the need for police officers to be engaged with the community, not just in a stop, but also in a school, also working with children, also being seen as enhancing the life of the community beyond law enforcement. That trust then enhances their ability to do a good job. And that's an area that was emphasized by this Task Force.

There's a great interest in training. We know some things that work, but we need more information to find out how to take to scale best practices when it comes to training so that police officers are able to work in a way that reduces the possibilities of bias, that allows them to deal with what are very stressful situations. Oftentimes, police officers have extraordinarily difficult jobs. They may be put in situations in which there's a lot of tension. And how do they deal with that appropriately, and how do they work with the community effectively to mitigate some of those challenges?

There are going to be some controversial recommendations in here. For example, the need for independent investigations and independent or special prosecutors when there is a situation in which law enforcement has interacted with an individual that results in death.

[*At this point, Task Force Cochair Laurie Robinson coughed.*]

I'm going to give Laurie some water right now—[*laughter*]—because I think it's important. She's been working very hard. [*Laughter*] And Michelle has that same cough.

But the importance of making sure that there is a sense of accountability when, in fact, law enforcement is involved in a deadly shooting is something that I think communities across the board are going to need to consider. There were some recommendations around prohibiting racial profiling. That's a step that we've already taken at the Federal level. If you talk to the FBI, if you talk to our Federal law enforcement, it may be challenging for them to change old practices, but they are confident that they're able to continue to do their job effectively. The same is going to be true at the local level as long as it is an intentional policy coming from the top that is followed up with key metrics so the people know exactly what is going on.

And then there is some discussions of technology. There's been a lot of talk about body cameras as a silver bullet or a solution. I think the Task Force concluded that there is a role for technology to play in building additional trust and accountability, but it's not a panacea, and that it has to be embedded in a broader change in culture and a legal framework that ensures that people's privacy is respected and that not only police officers, but the community themselves feel comfortable with how technologies are being used.

There's some additional recommendations that are very specific. For example, how law enforcement handles mass demonstrations. I think there was a lot of concern that bubbled up in the wake of Ferguson. The Federal Government has already taken it upon itself to look at how we are dealing with providing military equipment to local law enforcement and how that may be used. There are some recommendations that deal with civilian oversight and how that might be managed.

The point is that this report is going to contain a series of very specific, concrete, commonsense efforts for us to build trust. It will be good for police, and it will be good for the communities involved. And as a consequence, it will be good for the country. Everybody wants our streets safe, and everybody wants to make sure that laws are applied fairly and equitably.

Nobody, by the way, wants that more than law enforcement themselves. I was keenly interested in hearing from some of our law enforcement representatives who talked about how important it is for police to feel as if the community supports them, because they got into law enforcement to serve and protect, not to be viewed as some external force. And unfortunately, sometimes policies, politics, politicians put law enforcement in an untenable position.

There was some discussion about—within the report about how we have to look at the broader context in which law enforcement is happening. Our approach to our drug laws, for example, and criminalization of nonviolent offenses rather than taking more of a public health approach, that may be something that has an impact in eroding trust between law enforcement and communities. Issues—broader issues of poverty and isolation may have an impact. I emphasized to the Task Force that I think it's important for us to recognize that context, but I don't want us to have such a 40,000-foot argument that we lose track of the very specific concrete practices that can be instituted right now that will make a difference.

Now, last point I'll make: Most of the recommendations that have been made are directed at the 18,000 law enforcement jurisdictions that are out there. Law enforcement is largely a local function as opposed to a Federal function. Many of the recommendations that have been made for changes in Federal practice we already have entrain. Those that we do not yet have entrain, that we have not yet implemented, I'm going to be asking Eric Holder and the Justice Department and his successor to go through all these recommendations so that we can start implementing them.

I know that one area that's going to be of great interest is whether we can expand the COPS program that in the past has been very effective, continues to be effective, but is largely underfunded, to see if we can get more incentives for local communities to apply some of the best practices and lessons that are embodied in this report.

But a lot of our work is going to involve local police chiefs, local elected officials, States recognizing that the moment is now for us to make these changes. We have a great opportunity, coming out of some great conflict and tragedy, to really transform how we think about community law enforcement relations so that everybody feels safer and our law enforcement officers feel, rather than being embattled, feel fully supported.

We need to seize that opportunity. And so this is something that I'm going to stay very focused on in the months to come. I'm going to be pushing my Justice Department and the COPS program and others to continue to work on it. But I want to close by just once again saying thank you to the extraordinary contributions that have been made by this Task Force.

I expect our friends in the media to really focus on what's in this report and pay attention to it. So often we see an event that's flashy. It makes the news. People are crying out for solutions. And by the time recommendations are put forward, our focus has moved on and we don't actually see and pay attention to the concrete ways that we can improve the situation. This is a moment where a lot of work has been done. There's some good answers to be had if we don't make this a political football or sensationalize it, but rather really focus on getting the job done.

So I appreciate everybody's efforts. I'm going to be focused on it. I hope you will be too.

Thank you very much, everybody.

Q. Surely you don't mean us, do you?

The President. You pay attention, personally. It's more generically.

Thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:09 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the audio was incomplete.

Statement on Senator Barbara A. Mikulski's Decision Not To Seek Reelection
March 2, 2015

Senator Mikulski is more than just a legendary Senator for the people of Maryland, she's an institution in the United States Senate. Barbara's service to the people of Maryland spans decades, but her legacy will span generations. Barbara is the longest serving woman in Congress, and her leadership serves as an inspiration to millions of women and girls across the globe to stand up and lead.

As the chairwoman and now vice chairwoman of the Senate's Appropriations Committee, Barbara has always known that our budgets should reflect our deepest held values. In that spirit, Barbara has wielded her gavel and used her booming voice to advocate on behalf of paycheck fairness, childcare, health care, education, women's rights, and countless issues that have contributed to the strength of America's families. Thanks to her leadership, more women excel in their careers, more children have access to quality education, more families have health insurance, and more people are treated fairly under the law. I look forward to working with Senator Mikulski over the course of the next 2 years, and Michelle and I extend our warmest wishes to Barbara in her next endeavors.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Secretary of Defense Ashton B. Carter and an Exchange With Reporters
March 3, 2015

The President. Well, this is going to be the first opportunity that I have to get an extensive debriefing from Secretary Carter, who took a trip last week to Afghanistan and other parts of the region. He'll be giving me some impressions about how we're planning our drawdown and transition in Afghanistan and talk about some other regional issues.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel's Address to the U.S. Congress/Iran

One issue that we will be discussing is Iran. And obviously, that's been a topic of great interest today, so let me just make a couple comments on that. I did not have a chance to watch Prime Minister Netanyahu's speech. I was on a video conference with our European partners with respect to Ukraine. I did have a chance to take a look at the transcript, and as far as I can tell, there was nothing new.

The Prime Minister, I think, appropriately pointed out that the bond between the United States of America is unbreakable, and on that point, I thoroughly agree. He also pointed out that Iran has been a dangerous regime and continues to engage in activities that are contrary to the interests of the United States, to Israel, and to the region. And on that, we agree. He also pointed out the fact that Iran has repeatedly threatened Israel and engaged in the most venomous of anti-Semitic statements. And no one can dispute that.

But on the core issue, which is how do we prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon, which would make it far more dangerous and would give it scope for even greater action in the region, the Prime Minister didn't offer any viable alternatives. So let's be clear about what exactly the central concern should be, both for the United States and for Israel.

I've said since before I became President that one of my primary goals in foreign policy would be preventing Iran from getting nuclear weapons. And with the help of Congress and our international partners, we constructed an extraordinarily effective sanctions regime that pressured Iran to come to the table to negotiate in a serious fashion. They have now been negotiating over the last year, and during that period, Iran has, in fact, frozen its program, rolled back some of its most dangerous highly

enriched uranium, and subjected itself to the kinds of verifications and inspections that we had not previously seen. Keep in mind that when we shaped that interim deal, Prime Minister Netanyahu made almost the precise same speech about how dangerous that deal was going to be. And yet, over a year later, even Israeli intelligence officers and, in some cases, members of the Israeli Government, have to acknowledge that, in fact, it has kept Iran from further pursuing its nuclear program.

Now, the deal that we are trying to negotiate, that is not yet completed, would cut off the different pathways for Iran to advance its nuclear capabilities. It would roll back some elements of its program. It would ensure that it did not have what we call a breakout capacity that was shorter than a year's time. And it would subject Iran to the most vigorous inspections and verifications regimes that have ever been put in place.

And the alternative that the Prime Minister offers is no deal, in which case Iran will immediately begin once again pursuing its nuclear program, accelerate its nuclear program, without us having any insight into what they're doing and without constraint. And his essential argument is that if we just double down on sanctions, Iran won't want to do that.

Well, we have evidence from the past decade that sanctions alone are not sufficient to prevent Iran from pursuing its nuclear ambitions. And if it, in fact, does not have some sense that sanctions will be removed, it will not have an interest in avoiding the path that it's currently on.

So the bottom line is this: We don't yet have a deal. It may be that Iran cannot say yes to a good deal. I have repeatedly said that I would rather have no deal than a bad deal. But if we're successful in negotiating, then in fact, this will be the best deal possible to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon. Nothing else comes close. Sanctions won't do it. Even military action would not be as successful as the deal that we have put forward.

And I think it is very important not to be distracted by the nature of the Iranian regime's ambitions when it comes to territory or terrorism, all issues which we share a concern with Israel about and are working consistently with Israel on. Because we know that if in fact they obtained a nuclear weapon, all those problems would be worse.

So we're staying focused on the central issue here: How do we prevent Iran from getting a nuclear weapon? The path that we've proposed, if successful, by far is the best way to do that. That's demonstrable. And Prime Minister Netanyahu has not offered any kind of viable alternative that would achieve the same verifiable mechanism to prevent Iran from getting a nuclear weapon.

So I would urge the Members of Congress who were there to continue to express their strong support for Israel's security, to continue to express their strong interest in providing the assistance Israel needs to repel attacks. I think it's important for Members of Congress, on a bipartisan basis, to be unified in pushing back against terrorism in the region and the destabilizing efforts that Iran may have engaged in with our partners. Those are all things in which this administration and Israel agree.

But when it comes to this nuclear deal, let's wait until there's actually a deal on the table that Iran has agreed to, at which point everybody can evaluate it; we don't have to speculate. And what I can guarantee is that if it's a deal I've signed off on, I will be able to prove that it is the best way for us to prevent Iran from getting a nuclear weapon.

And for us to pass up on that potential opportunity would be a grave mistake. It's not one that I intend to make, and I will take that case to every Member of Congress once we actually have a deal. All right?

[*At this point, several reporters asked the President questions at once.*]

The President. Go ahead. Hold on, hold on. Hold on a second. Hold on. I'll take one question from Julie [Julie Pace, Associated Press]. Go ahead.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel's Address to the U.S. Congress/Speaker of the House of Representatives John A. Boehner/Israel-U.S. Relations/Iran

Q. Thank you. Now that you've had a chance to read the Prime Minister's remarks at least, do you feel like the speech he gave was appropriate, considering his upcoming elections and the upcoming deadline? And you also talked to other foreign leaders today in the call on Ukraine. Did Iran come up at all, and are you expecting any signs of support from them vis-a-vis your position versus the Prime Minister?

The President. No. The—well, all the folks on the call today share my position that we should see if we can get this deal done. It was not a topic of conversation.

With respect to the decision of the Speaker to offer up the House Chamber 2 weeks before Mr. Netanyahu's election to make this case, I think that question should be directed to Mr. Boehner.

As I said, it is very important for us not to politicize the relationship between Israel and the United States. It's very important for all of us Americans to realize that we have a system of government in which foreign policy runs through the executive branch and the President, not through other channels.

And I think it's important for us to stay focused on the problem at hand. And the specific problem that is being debated right now is not whether we trust the Iranian regime or not, it—we don't trust them. It's not whether Iran engages in destabilizing activities—everybody agrees with that. The central question is, how can we stop them from getting a nuclear weapon?

And what we know is that if we're able to get a deal, not only do we cut off all the various pathways for Iran getting a nuclear weapon, but we also know that we'll have a verification mechanism and an inspection mechanism where, if they cheat and if they engage in a covert program, we are far more likely to see it in time to do something about it.

What I also know is, if we don't have a deal, as Prime Minister Netanyahu suggested—if in fact he's right that they're not trustworthy, they intend to pursue a covert program, and they cheat—we'll be far less aware of it until it is potentially too late.

What I also know is, is that he made the same argument before this current interim deal, and even his officials in his own government had had to acknowledge that Iran has in fact maintained their end of the bargain.

So what I'm focused on right now is solving this problem. I'm not focused on the politics of it, I'm not focused on the theater of it. And my strong suggestion would be that Members of Congress, as they evaluate it, stay similarly focused.

All right. Thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:40 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom; President François Hollande of France; Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany; Prime Minister Matteo Renzi of Italy; and President Donald Franciszek Tusk of the European Council.

Remarks on the "Let Girls Learn" Initiative
March 3, 2015

The President. Thank you so much. Everybody, have a seat. Everybody, have a seat. Thank you, Charlene, for that terrific introduction, for everything that you've done to help those young girls in Liberia and all the young women I hope that are inspired here in the United States by seeing your example. We couldn't be prouder—except for your mom. She's prouder. [*Laughter*] Mom is here. So—and we know that you're just getting started, so you're going to do amazing things in the future.

I want to thank the Members of Congress who are here today, including Congresswoman Kay Granger, who's a leading advocate for development done right. Where is Kay? She was here just a second ago. She had to run back to vote on Homeland Security. So we really wanted to get her there on time. [*Laughter*]

I also want to mention Congresswoman Nita Lowey, who is also in the midst of this Department of Homeland Security vote, but has championed the cause of global education for over 20 years. We are looking forward to working with all of you on this initiative in the months ahead.

Now, my job is pretty easy. I am here to introduce her. [*Laughter*] An extraordinary woman—[*laughter*]—a passionate advocate for girls in the United States, around the globe—and in the Obama household. [*Laughter*] Michelle Obama. [*Applause*] Yay!

And in just a minute, she's going to announce a piece of this new initiative, which is sure to make Charlene and her fellow Peace Corps volunteers excited to get back to work. But before I turn it over to Michelle, I figure, you need a man's perspective. [*Laughter*] So I want to talk a little bit about why we all need to care about letting girls learn.

Now, I wish I could just say, because they've got the same potential as boys. It's pretty straightforward, and we could just stop there. This really should not be complicated. Wherever they live, whoever they are, every girl on this planet has value. Every girl on this planet deserves to be treated with dignity and equality. And that includes the chance to develop her mind and her talents and to live a life of her own choosing, to chart her own destiny. That may be obvious to us, but we know it's not obvious to everyone. Sixty-two million girls around the world who should be in school are not. That's not by accident. It's the direct result of barriers, large and small, that stand in the way of girls who want to learn.

In some cases, their families can't afford the school fees. In some cases, the only local school doesn't have a girls' restroom. Maybe the risk of being hurt or kidnapped or killed by men who will do anything to stop girls from learning is just too great. Maybe girls aren't in school because they're expected to get married and become mothers while they're still teens or even earlier. Even today, in too many parts of the world, girls are valued more for their bodies than for their minds. That's not just antiquated. It's not just a bad strategy for any country that's serious about growing their economy or promoting stability. It is just plain wrong. And we have to do more to stop it.

Now, I'm proud to say that the United States already does a great deal to support girls' education around the world. But what we do we tend to do quietly. It doesn't get a lot of publicity. And what we determined—what she determined—[*laughter*].

The First Lady. We all determined.

The President. What we all determined is that we've got to take this work to the next level and tie all our different programs together in a single, coordinated strategy. And that's what this initiative is about.

Our diplomats and development experts are hard at work. We're making it clear to any country that's our partner or wants to be our partner that they need to get serious about increasing the number of girls in school. We are looking for every opportunity to put our partnerships with NGOs and businesses and foundations to work every day on behalf of girls everywhere. So this will be, yes, a focus of the First Lady's, but it's also going to be a focus of the President of the United States. And we expect results, because this matters to all of us.

And just to be clear, I come to this issue as a concerned citizen, but also as the leader of the world's largest economy and the Commander of—in Chief of the world's most powerful military. And I'm convinced that a world in which girls are educated is a safer, more stable, more prosperous place.

And the evidence is compelling. We know that when girls are educated, they're more likely to delay marriage. Their future children, as a consequence, are more likely to be healthy and better nourished. Their future wages increase, which, in turn, strengthens the security of their family. And national growth gets a boost as well.

From a political standpoint and a security standpoint, places where women and girls are treated as full and equal citizens tend to be more stable, tend to be more democratic. So this is not just a humanitarian issue, this is an economic issue, and it is a security issue. And that's why it has to be a foreign policy priority.

Now, I will confess, I also come to this as the father of two fabulous, extraordinary, awesome young women. [*Laughter*] They've got a lot to offer to the world. And what we know is, is that everywhere, there are girls just like Malia and Sasha. They're funny, and they're caring, and they're inquisitive, and they're strong, and their heads are buzzing with ideas. And they're constantly changing their minds about what they're going to do when they grow up because there are just so many things they could be doing and want to do and want to explore.

What an extraordinary privilege it is to be the father of those two girls, to watch them learn and grow and become strong and capable women. And I want to make sure that no girl out there is denied her chance to be a strong, capable women—woman with the resources that she needs to succeed, that no girl is prevented from making her unique contributions to the world. Every child is precious. Every girl is precious. Every girl deserves an education.

And that's the message that we want to deliver here today and we're going to sustain over the next 2 years and beyond: Let girls learn.

Now, to say more about why and how we're going to do this—[*laughter*]—let me step aside for a very strong and capable woman: the First Lady of the United States, Michelle Obama. [*Laughter*] Thank you. Yay! [*Laughter*]

The First Lady. Thank you all so much. Thank you, guys. Thank you.

President Obama. Yay!

The First Lady. Yay! [*Laughter*] Well, you guys, thank you. We are excited. This is good stuff. And I want to thank Barack Obama for that—[*laughter*]—for that wonderful introduction. He doesn't always get to introduce me a lot, so I like to watch him say good things about me. [*Laughter*] It's a really nice thing. But as you can hear from his passion, I'm just so grateful that he is such a champion for our girls—all our girls—not just for Malia and Sasha, but for every girl. And he does it every day as President, and he does it even better as a father. And I am proud of him.

I also want to recognize Ambassador Rice and Representatives Granger and Lowey, who had to leave; Valerie Jarrett for her tremendous leadership on this issue. I want to also thank Charlene for her great work, just an inspiring young person doing terrific things. Just an example of why this initiative is so important, all the outstanding work she's doing to give girls worldwide the education they deserve.

And I want to thank all of you for the work that you all are doing. For years, you all have been working at the grassroots, one family, one community, one girl at a time. And you've been driven all along by a fundamental belief about how change really happens, a belief that Barack and I share: that true change doesn't happen from the top down, it happens from the bottom up

And as I've traveled the world over the past 6 years, I've seen time and again how our young people—particularly our girls—are so often pushed to the very bottom of their societies. Everywhere I go, I meet these girls, and they are so fiercely intelligent and hungry to make something of themselves. These girls are our change makers, our future doctors and teachers and entrepreneurs. They're our dreamers and our visionaries who could change the world as we know it.

Just take the example of Malala Yousafzai. All it takes is 30 seconds in a room with this young woman to realize what a blessing she is to our world. And Malala would be the first to tell you that she is not unique, that there are millions of girls around the world just like her. These girls know they have the spark of something extraordinary inside of them, but too often, that spark is snuffed out by circumstances of their birth or the norms of their communities.

And that's where this issue becomes personal for me and for Barack, because I see myself in these girls. I see our daughters in these girls. And like all of you, I just can't walk away from them. Like you, I can't just sit back and accept the barriers that keep them from realizing their promise. So I know that I want to use my time and my platform as First Lady and beyond to make a real impact on this issue. I want to lift up the extraordinary work all of you have been doing long before I came to this issue,

and I want to bring new resources and new partners to this effort.

And in recent years, I've worked with my staff, and we've consulted with so many of you, to ask how I can be most helpful. And folks from CARE and Brookings, the Global Partnership for Education, the National Peace Corps Association, and so many others—you guys have stepped up. And time and again, you have told me that whether—whatever these obstacles these girls face—whether it's school fees or violence or cultural beliefs that girls simply aren't worthy of an education—you've said that these problems will not be fixed from on high, that these are community challenges that call for community solutions.

And that made a lot of sense to me, and it made a lot of sense to my husband, because that's the kind of work we did long before we came to the White House, back when Barack was a community organizer and I was running a little nonprofit AmeriCorps program in Chicago.

So with the help of many of you in this room, and in collaboration with the Peace Corps, I am thrilled to announce that as part of "Let Girls Learn," we're going to be launching a new community-focused girls' education initiative across the globe. This effort will draw on the talent and energy of the nearly 7,000 Peace Corps volunteers serving in more than 60 countries.

Through this effort, Peace Corps will be supporting hundreds of new community projects to help girls go to school and stay in school, everything from after-school mentoring to girls' leadership camps, to entrepreneurial projects like Bosh Bosh that Charlene talked about, and many more.

And I want to emphasize that these programs will be community generated and community led. They'll be based on solutions devised by local leaders, families and, yes, even the girls themselves. And you can learn more about these projects and how to support these efforts at letgirlslearn.peacecorps.gov.

As part of this effort, the Peace Corps is also going to be eventually training all of its volunteers about gender and girls' education. So even volunteers who are focusing on other issues like health care or agriculture can also help support girls' education on the ground.

In other words, Peace Corps will soon be bringing new expertise and leadership on girls' education into every single community they serve. So while the focus of this effort will be local, because of this work, the scope will be global and the impact will truly be generational.

I mean, if you think about what the Peace Corps means to so many, just think about the many leaders in developing countries—businesswomen, politicians, activists—who can trace their journey back to a Peace Corps volunteer who inspired them and invested in them. And think about the kind of daughters these leaders are now raising. Think about all the other women and girls these leaders are inspiring today. That's the kind of impact that this initiative can have.

And I am so excited to kick this effort off with a trip later this month to Japan and Cambodia. I'll be starting with a visit with Mrs. Akie Abe, the wife of Japan's Prime Minister, who also shares our passion for girls' education and is eager to partner with us in this work. I'll also be meeting with our Ambassador to Japan, Caroline Kennedy, who just happens to be the daughter of the President who started the Peace Corps. And in Cambodia, I'll be meeting with Peace Corps volunteers and visiting a school where community-driven solutions are changing girls' lives.

But while the focus of this work is international, I just want to be clear that for me, "Let Girls Learn" isn't just about improving girls' education abroad. It's also about reminding our young people of the hunger they should be feeling for their own education here at home.

You see, through "Let Girls Learn," I hope that more of our girls—and our boys—here in the U.S. will learn about the sacrifices girls worldwide are making to get their education, how they're pushing forward in the face of poverty and violence, death threats, and so many other horrors. I want our young people to be awed by these girls. But more importantly, I want them to be inspired and motivated by these girls.

I want our kids to realize that while their own school may be far from perfect—and believe you me, this guy here is working hard to fix that—they still have an obligation to show up every day to that classroom and learn as much as they can. I want our kids to understand the transformative power of education. That's something that Barack and I understand from our own experiences. That's our life story: how a good education can lift you from the most humble circumstances into a life you never could have imagined.

And finally, I want our kids in this country to be citizens of the world. I want them to connect with and learn from kids in every corner of the globe.

That's why, when I travel abroad, I use all kinds of social media and technology to reach back here to young people at home. And I'm going to be doing so again during my trip to Asia, working with PBS and Girls Rising and Girl Scouts and—yay!—[*laughter*]—so many other great partners because I want our young people to learn about the world and dream of being Peace Corps volunteers and diplomats and international business leaders and more. I want all our young people here in the U.S. and around the globe to dream big dreams, as my husband always says, dream big dreams for themselves. I want them to have big, ambitious futures.

And I know that's possible, no matter what obstacles they face, because I've seen it again and again in the most unlikely places. The Martin Luther King Girls Secondary School, which I visited last year in Senegal, is a wonderful example. The school was concrete floor classrooms, rooms containing little more than desks and a few faded posters. But, oh, those girls, man, they were fierce, ambitious, confident. They had serious dreams for their future.

One of the girls wrote a poem about those dreams. And she said it was about a world free from pollution and global warming, a world where violence and wars would be replaced by mutual acceptance and tolerance and love. The poem ended with this line: She said, "I have a dream that one day, the Martin Luther King Girls School of Dakar, my school, will be as prestigious as Harvard and Princeton Universities." [*Laughter*] Yes.

So we owe these girls, and girls like them across the globe, an education worthy of those dreams. So I am so proud to join this movement. I'm honored to learn more from all of you. I am inspired by you. And I'm excited to roll up my sleeves and work hard with you over the next few years and beyond. So let's get to work.

Thank you all.

President Obama. Yay! Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:02 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Charlene Espinoza, volunteer, U.S. Peace Corps. The First Lady referred to National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice; and Nobel Prize winner and education activist Malala Yousafzai.

Statement on Congressional Passage of Legislation To Fund the Department of Homeland Security

March 3, 2015

Every day, the men and women of the Department of Homeland Security work to secure our borders, respond to disasters, guard our coasts, protect our cybersecurity, and keep our ports and airports safe. They're law enforcement professionals and brave patriots who do a remarkable job and deserve our gratitude and respect. Today, after far too long, Congress finally voted to fully fund their mission. To make sure the Americans who protect our country and our people have the resources they need to get the job done, I will sign this bill into law as soon as I receive it.

NOTE: The statement referred to H.R. 240.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Ukraine
March 3, 2015

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13660 of March 6, 2014, is to continue in effect beyond March 6, 2015.

The actions and policies of persons that undermine democratic processes and institutions in Ukraine; threaten its peace, security, stability, sovereignty, and territorial integrity; and contribute to the misappropriation of its assets, as well as the actions and policies of the Government of the Russian Federation, including its purported annexation of Crimea and its use of force in Ukraine, continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. Therefore, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13660 with respect to Ukraine.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
March 3, 2015.

NOTE: The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Zimbabwe
March 3, 2015

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13288 of March 6, 2003, with respect to the actions and policies of certain members of the Government of Zimbabwe and other persons to undermine Zimbabwe's democratic processes or institutions is to continue in effect beyond March 6, 2015.

The threat constituted by the actions and policies of certain members of the Government of Zimbabwe and other persons to undermine Zimbabwe's democratic processes or institutions has not been resolved. These actions and policies continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the foreign policy of the United States. For these reasons, I have determined that it is necessary to continue this national emergency and to maintain in force the sanctions to respond to this threat.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
March 3, 2015.

NOTE: The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Message to the Congress Designating Funds for Overseas Contingency Operations and Global Counterterrorism
March 4, 2015

To the Congress of the United States:

In accordance with language under the heading "Coast Guard, Operating Expenses" of the Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act, 2015 (the "Act"), I hereby designate for Overseas Contingency Operations/Global War on Terrorism all funding so designated by the Congress in the Act pursuant to section 251(b)(2)(A) of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985, as amended, as outlined in the enclosed list of accounts.

The details of this action are set forth in the enclosed memorandum from the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
March 4, 2015.

Statement on the 45th Anniversary of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty
March 5, 2015

Forty-five years ago today the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty entered into force. At the time that the treaty was signed, it was widely predicted that dozens of countries would develop nuclear weapons, a prospect that threatened to disrupt global stability and security. Instead, thanks to worldwide collective efforts and commitment, the NPT has become the cornerstone of the nuclear nonproliferation regime, reinforcing international peace and security and preventing the further spread of nuclear weapons, while promoting the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Today, global nuclear stockpiles are at their lowest levels since the 1950s.

As I stated in Prague in 2009, reinforced in Berlin in 2013, and again reaffirmed last month in my National Security Strategy, the United States seeks the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons. We encourage all states to strengthen the NPT as a basis for international cooperation to achieve that shared goal. The NPT remains essential today, and our efforts to achieve nuclear disarmament cannot succeed unless we stand together to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and work for full compliance with the NPT. Our commitment to nonproliferation is at the center of our efforts, along with our P5-plus-1 partners, to reach a diplomatic agreement that prevents Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon and ensures that Iran's nuclear program is peaceful.

The United States is meeting its NPT obligations and is committed to further strengthening the nonproliferation regime. During my administration, the United States has reduced the role nuclear weapons play in our security and reduced the size of our arsenal. Earlier this year we marked the fourth anniversary of the entry into force of the New START Treaty. Under New START and in conformity with our NPT obligations, we are reducing our strategic nuclear weapon stockpile to the lowest levels in more than a half century, and we are prepared to negotiate further reductions, while protecting our security and that of our friends and allies around the world.

We can only realize the full benefits of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy to advance development and protect the environment if we are confident that civil nuclear energy will not be diverted for weapons. For that, we depend on the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to promote the safe, secure uses of nuclear energy and to ensure that it remains exclusively peaceful. As we prepare for the Ninth Review Conference of the NPT, the United

States stands ready to work with other NPT parties to achieve a successful outcome that reinforces the vitality of this treaty which is so fundamental to global security.

Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session at a Town Hall Meeting at Benedict College in Columbia, South Carolina
March 6, 2015

The President. Hello, South Carolina! Thank you! Well, it is good to see everybody. It's good to be back in South Carolina. Now, you all—if you all have a seat, take a seat. If you don't have a seat, I'm sorry. [*Laughter*]

I want to say thank you to Benedict College for your hospitality. I want to thank Tiana for the great introduction. Give her a big round of applause. We have all kinds of luminaries and dignitaries and big shots here today—[*laughter*]—but I'm going to just mention a couple of them: one of the finest gentlemen and finest legislators we have in the country, your Congressman, Jim Clyburn; your outstanding mayor, Steve Benjamin; the president of this great institution, Dr. David Swinton. All right. Go Tigers!

It's been a while since I was in South Carolina. In fact, I got—it's been too long. It has. I'm not going to lie. I love you, and I've been loving you. It's just I've had a lot of stuff to do since I last saw you. But it was wonderful to be backstage because I got a chance to see so many of the wonderful people that I worked with back in 2008. If it was not for this great State, the Palmetto State, if it was not for all the people who had, at a grassroots level, gone door to door and talked to folks, got everybody fired up and ready to go, if it hadn't been for all of you, I might not be President. And I'm truly grateful for that. I'm truly grateful for that.

I hope that you don't mind, I also brought another good friend: the Attorney General of the United States, Eric Holder. We decided to take a Friday road trip together, because Eric has not only been a great friend, but an extraordinary Attorney General. As some of you know, he is going to go enjoy himself and has—is going to retire from public service. But I know he's still going to be doing great things around the country. I'm really going to miss him.

Now, I am not here to make a long speech. I'm here to make a short speech, because what I want to do is spend most of my time interacting, having a conversation. I want to get questions; I want to hear what you guys are thinking about. This is a good thing for me, to get out of Washington and talk to normal folk. [*Laughter*]

And I thought it was appropriate to come here because tomorrow I'll be visiting Selma, Alabama, for the 50th anniversary of the march across the Edmund Pettus Bridge. And one of the things I might talk about—I'm still working on my speech, but it might come up—is the meaning of Selma for your generation. Because Selma is not just about commemorating the past, it's about honoring the legends who helped change this country through your actions today, in the here and now. Selma is now. Selma is about the courage of ordinary people doing extraordinary things because they believe they can change the country, that they can shape our Nation's destiny. Selma is about each of us asking ourselves what we can do to make America better.

And historically, it's been young people like you who helped lead that march. You think about somebody like John Lewis who was one of the key leaders and will be joining us tomorrow. He was 23 when he helped lead that march that transformed the country. You think about the Children's Crusade in Birmingham or the 12-year-old boy who was elected head of the NAACP youth chapter who grew up to be Jim Clyburn. It was young people.

It was young people who stubbornly insisted on justice, stubbornly refused to accept the world as it is, that transformed not just the country, but transformed the world. You can see that spirit reflected in a poster put out by

the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee in the 1960s. It had a picture of a young John Lewis kneeling in protest against an all-White swimming pool. And it reads: "Come let us build a new world together."

Come let us build a new world together. That's the story of America. That's why immigrants came here: the idea of building a new world together; not just settling on what is, but imagining what might be; insisting we live up to our highest ideals, our deepest values.

That's why I wanted to come here to Columbia and here to Benedict College, because we all know we still have work to do. We've got to ensure not just the absence of formal, legal oppression, but the presence of an active, dynamic opportunity: good jobs that pay good wages, a good start for every child, health care for every family, a higher education that prepares you for the world without crippling you with debt, a fairer and more just legal and criminal justice system.

Now, the good news is, we're in much better shape now than we were 6 years ago. This morning we learned that our economy created nearly 300,000 new jobs last month. The unemployment rate went down—[*applause*]—the unemployment rate ticked down to 5.5 percent, which is the lowest it's been since the spring of 2008. Our businesses have now added more than 200,000 jobs a month for the past year. And we have not seen a streak like that in 37 years, since Jimmy Carter was President. So all told, over the past 5 years, our businesses have created nearly two—12 million new jobs.

And what's more, the unemployment rate for African Americans is actually falling faster than the overall unemployment rate, which makes sense, because it went up faster, too, during the recession. But it's still too high. The unemployment rate across the country and here in South Carolina is still higher than we want, which means we've got more work to do. And we've got to make sure those are good jobs that pay a living wage and have benefits with them.

So we can't let up now. We've got to do everything we can to keep this progress going. This community, I know, is doing its part to prepare students for this new economy. Programs like YouthBuild are giving young people who may have gotten off track a chance to earn a degree and get the skills they need for the for the 21st century. City Year AmeriCorps—[*applause*]—in the house. I see their jackets. They're working with the public schools in Columbia to increase graduation rates. The Benedict College community is doing outstanding work beyond your walls. We put you on the Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll. You earned that honor.

So as long as I'm President, we're going to keep doing everything we can to make sure that young people like you can achieve your dreams. Now, we can't do it for you; you've got to do it yourselves. But we can give you the tools you need. We can give you a little bit of a helping hand and a sense of possibility and direction. You got to do the work, but we can make it a little bit easier for you.

That's why, 1 year ago, we launched what we call "My Brother's Keeper." It's an initiative that challenges communities to bring together nonprofits and foundations and businesses and government, all focused on creating more pathways for young people to succeed. And this week, we put out a report showing the progress that's been made. That progress is thanks to the nearly 200 local leaders who've accepted what we call My Brother's Keeper's Challenge, including Mayor Benjamin and the mayors of Johnston and Holly Hill. They're doing great work mentoring young people, giving them a new path for success.

I'm hugely optimistic about the progress we can make together this year and in the years ahead, because ultimately, I'm optimistic about all of you. Young people in this country make me optimistic. The future we can build together. This new world that we can build together. I'm proud of you. But we've got a lot more work to do, starting right now, because I'm about to take your questions.

Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you.

All right, so, got to make sure the mike works. So here's how this is going to work. You raise your hand. If I call on you, then wait for

the mike so everybody can hear your question. If you could stand up, introduce yourself. Try to keep your question relatively short. I'll try to keep my answer relatively short. That way we can get more questions and answers in. The only other thing—the only other rule is, we're going to go girl, boy, girl, boy, just to make it fair—[*laughter*]—so it's not always just the boys thinking they know everything. [*Laughter*]

So who wants to start? She says it's her birthday, so we'll call on her first. All right. Here, wait for the microphone. Go ahead and stand up. We've got to be able to see you. Happy birthday.

Q. Thank you.

The President. What's your name?

Q. My name is Daranesha Hamilton. I really don't have a question, I just wanted you to talk to me. [*Laughter*]

The President. Okay. She doesn't have a question. Happy birthday. [*Laughter*] All right. Next time, you've got to have a question. [*Laughter*] But it is your birthday, so we're going to make an exception.

Woman right there in the back. We're going to go—I know I said boy, girl, boy, girl, but that didn't count because she didn't ask a question.

Right there, yes. Yes, you had your hand up. Yes. Right. Yes, you! Go ahead.

Keystone XL Pipeline Project/Climate Change

Q. Okay. Hello.

The President. Hello.

Q. I'm a native Chicagoan, and I welcome you.

The President. Well, what are you doing down here?

Q. I love it.

The President. It's warmer, isn't it?

Q. I'm down here to protect the environment.

The President. Okay.

Q. And I wanted to thank you for vetoing the XL Keystone pipeline. Thank you. Thank you! Thank you!

The President. Okay.

Q. You are what we worked for. You are what we hoped for.

The President. Well, that—I appreciate that. Do you have a question for me?

Q. Yes. Do you think that will stop the XL Keystone pipeline?

The President. Well, for those of you who haven't been following this, the Keystone pipeline is a proposed pipeline that runs from Canada through the United States down to the Gulf of Mexico. Its proponents argue that it would be creating jobs in the United States. But the truth is, it's Canadian oil that's then going to go to the world market. It will probably create about a couple thousand construction jobs for a year or two, but only create about 300 permanent jobs.

The reason that a lot of environmentalists are concerned about it is, the way that you get the oil out in Canada is an extraordinarily dirty way of extracting oil. And obviously, there are always risks in piping a lot of oil through Nebraska farmland and other parts of the country.

What we've done is, I vetoed it because the Congress was trying to short-circuit a traditional process that we go through. I haven't made a final determination on it, but what I've said is, is that we're not going to authorize a pipeline that benefits largely a foreign company if it can't be shown that it is safe and if it can't be shown that overall it would not contribute to climate change.

Now, a lot of young people here, you may not be worrying about climate change. Although it's very cold down here, you can't attribute a couple days of cold weather or a couple days of hot weather to the climate changing. But the pattern overall is that the planet is getting warmer. That's undeniable. And it's getting warmer at a faster rate than even the scientists expect.

And you might think, well, you know, getting warmer, that's not—no big deal. Folks in South Carolina, we're used to dealing with hot weather; we can manage. But understand that when you start having overall global temperatures go up, even if it means more snow in some places or more rain in some places—it's not going to be hotter every single place, but the overall temperature is going up—that starts changing weather patterns across the

globe. It starts raising ocean levels. It starts creating more drought and wildfires in some places.

It means that there are entire countries that may suddenly no longer be able to grow crops, which means people go hungry, which then creates conflict. It means diseases that used to be just in tropical places start creeping up, and suddenly, we've got a whole new set of, say, insect-borne diseases, like malaria, that we thought we had gotten rid of, now they're suddenly in places like the United States.

We start running out of water. It puts stresses and strains on our infrastructure. Hurricanes become more powerful when the water is warmer, which means a lot of our coastal cities and towns are put at risk.

I say all that because it may not be the thing that you are worried about right now. Right now you're worried about getting a job, or right now you're worried about is your girlfriend still mad at you—[*laughter*]—or right now you're thinking about just getting through classes and exams. I understand that. But what you have to appreciate, young people, is this will affect you more than old people like me. I'll be gone when the worst of this hits. And the disruptions—economic, social, security disruptions that it can cause can make your life and the lives of your children much harder and much worse. And if you don't stop it at a certain point, you can't stop it at all, and it could be catastrophic.

And I'm—I just want you to understand, what I just described, it's not science fiction, it's not speculation. This is what the science tells us. So we've got to worry about it, which is part of the reason why we've invested in things like green energy: trying to increase fuel efficiency standards on cars, trying to make sure that we use more solar and wind power, trying to find new energy sources that burn clean instead of dirty. And everybody here needs to be supportive and thinking about that because you're the ones who are going to have to live with it.

And what—I'm very proud of the fact that we've doubled the amount of clean energy produced since I've been President. We're increasing fuel efficiency standards on cars, which will save you, by the way, money at the pump. Don't think that just because gas prices are low right now—that's nice, it puts some more money in your pocket, but that's not going to last. So don't start going out and saying, oh, I'm going to buy a big gas guzzler now—[*laughter*]—right? You—because the trajectory of the future is that gas—oil is going to get more expensive. It's going to get harder to extract. We're going to have to transition overtime to a new economy.

And there's huge opportunity. We can create a lot of jobs in those areas if we are focused on it and planning for it.

All right? But thank you very much for the question.

All right. It's a gentleman's turn. We've got any mikes back here? We've got the mike? I just wanted to make sure. Let's see. This young man right here in the red tie, looking sharp. [*Laughter*] You always wear a tie, or you just wore it today?

Q. I wear it often.

The President. Okay, good. Yes. [*Laughter*] I like that. Looking clean. Yes. Go ahead.

Higher Education Costs/Community Colleges

Q. My name is Brandon Pope, graduating senior here at Benedict College, majoring in business management.

The President. Excellent.

Q. My question is, tuition is very high in the United States——

The President. Can I make it lower? [*Laughter*] Is that the question? [*Laughter*]

Q. ——while in other countries, it's free. What are some of your plans to assist those that are having trouble paying for school?

The President. Well, let me—first of all, let me just say, this is a cause near and dear to my heart because Michelle and I, we weren't born into wealthy families, so the only way we got our education was because we got help: loans, grants, work-study programs. If we hadn't had that available to us, we could not have pursued the education we did and couldn't have achieved what we achieved.

And even with all the help we got, we had so much debt when we got married that we had negative liabilities—[*laughter*]—we just joined our—together our negative liabilities. And it took us, like, 10 years to pay off our debt. For the first 10 years of our marriage, our loans were more expensive than our mortgage. It was only about 2 years or 3 years before I was elected a U.S. Senator that I paid off my loans.

Now, the truth is that, historically, the reason America succeeded so well is, we've always been ahead of the curve in educating our population. We were the first country to say, let's have free public high schools. When folks who had fought in World War II came back, gave them a GI bill. Middle class helped to get built because people got new skills. And through much of the sixties and the seventies and the eighties, our public university system was hugely important in giving people a pathway into the middle class.

Now, here's what happened. Typically, State legislatures started cutting support for State universities. Those State universities and colleges then decided, well, we're going to have to jack up tuition to make up for the money that we've lost because the State is not giving us as much. And that's how tuition started to get higher and higher and higher.

Now, what I've done since I became President was a couple things. We significantly expanded the Pell grant program, with the help of people like Jim Clyburn. It used to be that the student loan program was run through the banks and the banks would take a cut. They were making billions of dollars on student loans. We said, why do we have to go through the banks? Let's just give it directly to the students, save that money, and give it to more students and increase the size of the Pell grant.

And we initiated a program that many of you can still take advantage of, and that is, we capped the percentage of your income that you have to pay in repaying your student loans so that if you decide to become a teacher or you decide to become a social worker, you get a job just starting off that's not paying you a lot of money, but is in the field that you want, you don't have to say no because you can't afford it. It's only going to be 10 percent of your income, so it makes your debt payments manageable.

But what we still have to do is—to deal with the question you pointed out—which is, how do we just keep tuition lower generally? Now, the big proposal that I put forward this year is, let's make community colleges free for those who are—[*applause*]. Now, it would be conditioned. You would have to keep up a certain GPA. You'd have to put in some sweat equity into the thing. But the point is, those first 2 years were free. The advantage of that is, first of all, a lot of young people start at community colleges, and they may not want a 4-year degree, but they can get a 2-year degree that gives them the skills they need to get a job and not have any debt.

Even if you want to go to a 4-year college, for a lot of young people, it may be a good option to go to a community college for the first four—2 years, then transfer your credits. And you've at least saved half of what you would otherwise spend on your 4-year degree. And we can do this just by closing some loopholes in the tax system that gives companies the ability to avoid paying the taxes that they're owed—they owe.

So far, at least, I haven't gotten the kind of support I'd like from some of my Republican friends in the Senate and House of Representatives. But we're going to keep on working on it because it's a smart idea. Look, I want ultimately—ultimately, I want at least the first 2 years of college to be just like public high schools are now. And everybody—because you—it is very hard nowadays to find a well-paying job without some form of higher education—without some form of higher education.

Even if you end up working in a factory these days—you go into a modern factory—it's all computerized, and you've got to know math, and you've got to be able to function in a high-tech environment. So it's a proposal whose time has come. We may not be able to convince Republicans to get it done this year, but we're going to just keep on going at this. Ultimately, this is what is going to keep America at the cutting edge. And if we're able to do that, then we're going to be able save you a little bit

of money, and you won't have the same kind of debt that I had to take out when I got my degree.

All right? Thank you for the question.

All right, it's a young lady's turn now. That young lady in the orange right there. It's hard to miss—[*laughter*]—got the yellow and the orange. Did you wear that just so I'd call on you? [*Laughter*]

Education/The President's Advice to Young People

Q. Just for you. Thank you for being here, President Obama. My name is Rania Jamison. I am a public relations consultant and a community organizer. I am, most proudly, the parent of two young Black males.

The President. There you go.

Q. Sit down for a moment because I have an 18-year-older and, yes, I have recently birthed a 1-year-older.

The President. Oh, oh. [*Laughter*] That's a big spread. [*Laughter*]

Q. Seventeen years.

The President. It took you that long to forget what it was like. [*Laughter*]

Q. I have a quick question for you, primarily about my 18-year-older. He is a scholarship student-athlete at South Carolina State University. I'm very proud of the fact that he is there. But as I'm sure you are aware, HBCUs—in particular, South Carolina State University is facing a bit of an uphill battle at this moment. I have a question for you for students like him that are there, others across the world that are facing situations that are insurmountable and challenging: How do you stay motivated, and what particular advice do you have for me to take back to Lenard, to tell him to stay encouraged, continue to keep the hope alive, and do his best? Thank you.

The President. Well, I mean, the main thing you should tell him is listen to your mom. [*Laughter*] I hope you recorded that. So—you did? Look, I'm trying to remember what it was like being 18 and 19 and 20. It's been a while. But the one thing that I always say to young people coming up these days is, you should be wildly optimistic about your possibilities in your future.

So often, when we watch the nightly news or read the papers, all you're hearing about is bad stuff going on. It just seems like, man, there's war and strife, and folks are arguing and yelling, and conflict. But the truth is, is that today, right now, you are more likely to be healthier, wealthier, less discriminated against, have more opportunity, less likely to be caught up in violence than probably any time in human history.

The opportunities for you to get information and to get an education and expose yourself to the entire world because of technology is unmatched. It's never been like this before. Your ability to start your own business or carve your own path has never been greater. So my first and general point is do not get cynical about what's possible.

The second thing is, you've got to work really hard. And there's no free lunch, and you can't make excuses. In particular, when I'm talking to young African American men, sometimes, I think the sense is, cards are stacked against us, and discrimination is still out there, and so it's easy sometimes just to kind of pull back and say, well, you know, this is just too hard.

And this is part of why it's so important for us to remember Selma tomorrow. It's not as hard as it was 50 years ago. It's not as hard as it was when Jim Clyburn was coming up, and he's now one of the most powerful men in the country, growing up right here in South Carolina.

So there are no excuses not to put in the effort. There are no excuses not to hit the books. If you want a good education in this country, you can get a good education, even if you are in a bad school. And I'll be honest with you, we've got to do some work to make schools more equal. Right here in South Carolina, there are still schools that were built back in the 1800s that haven't been repaired and don't have decent restrooms and don't have proper books.

So we've still got to fight to make sure that every child, not just some, have equal opportunity. That's a worthy fight. But you can still learn even in that school. Even in the most

rundown school, if you're putting in the effort, you can get a good education. So you can't make excuses. Even as you advocate for justice, you've got to make sure that you're also taking advantage of the opportunities that you currently have.

But that brings me to one last piece of advice for young people, and that is, think about more than just yourself. Think about how you can have an impact beyond yourself. The people who I know who are really happy and successful as they get older, it's because they have an impact on something other than just their own situation. They're not just thinking about, how do I get mine? They're thinking about, how does everybody get their fair share? And when they do that, that gives meaning to your life, that gives purpose to your life, that gives you influence and a sense of purpose.

And you've got to have a sense of purpose beyond just the almighty dollar. I mean, look, I am—we live in a free market society, and one of the things that sets America apart is business and entrepreneurship and hustle, and some—folks are out there just, they're trying to make a new product or create a new service, and the profit motive is strong. And that's good. That's important. But if that's all you're thinking about, and you're not thinking about how you can also have an impact through your church, or if you're not thinking about how you can treat your employees right when you do get a business, if you're not thinking, once you do make it, what am I giving back to make sure that I'm giving a helping hand to the folks coming up behind me—if you're not thinking that way, you won't be able to get through the tough times. What gets you through tough times is that sense of purpose. And that purpose cannot just be about yourself, it's got to be about something larger.

So all right. Oh, we've got a young man right here. He's standing tall. Go ahead. Yes, sir.

Education

Q. My name is Trace Adams.

The President. Hey, Trace. How old are you, man?

Q. Ten.

The President. So you're in fifth grade?

Q. Fourth.

The President. Fourth grade? You're a tall guy.

Q. Thank you.

The President. So what's going on, Trace?

Q. I was just wondering—I'm 10, and I was just wondering when you were interested in being a President.

The President. Well, I wasn't—it wasn't when I was 10. Are you thinking about it? [*Laughter*]

Q. A little bit, yes, sir. [*Laughter*]

The President. Okay. All right. I mean, you're definitely ahead of me. The—now, just remember, you got to wait until you're 35. That's in the Constitution. So you've got at least 25 years to prepare.

I did not think about—when I was 10, I wasn't thinking about being President. I think when I was 10, I was interested in being an architect. I was interested in the idea of, like, building buildings, and I thought that was pretty cool. And then, I went through a bunch of stuff, and for a while, I thought I might be a basketball player, and it turned out, I was too slow and I couldn't jump. [*Laughter*] And so I stopped thinking that. And then I became interested in being a lawyer, and I did become a lawyer.

But what are you interested in right now? What subjects are you interested in school?

Q. Social studies, actually.

The President. Social studies? So you're interested in public policy. Are you starting to read the newspapers and things? Do you discuss—is that your dad behind you?

Q. That's me.

Q. Yes, sir.

The President. And you discuss the issues with your dad and stuff?

Q. Oh, yes, sir, definitely.

The President. Oh, yes, I can tell you do. [*Laughter*] Okay.

Well, I think the most important thing is to just make sure that you work hard in school. I think it's really good if you get involved in, like, some service projects and help out people in your community, whether it's through the Scouts or your church or at school or some

other program, so that you get used to trying to help other people.

Make sure you graduate from college. And then, who knows, you might end up being—I might just be warming up the seat for you. [*Laughter*] And if you become President, I want you to remind everybody how, when you talked to President Obama, he said, go for it. All right? Don't forget me. [*Laughter*]

All right. That's Trey—Trey, who's 10 years old and already thinking—he's already thinking about public policy. I just want all the folks in college to just notice, he's reading the papers and talking public policy. [*Laughter*] So if all you're doing is watching the ballgame—don't let 10-year-old Trey embarrass you now. [*Laughter*]

All right, it's a young lady's turn. Well, it's not going to help you just to be all, like—you've got, like, five people all helping you out. I'll call on one of the young ladies there who's part of City Year. They're wearing the City—did you do paper, scissor, stone? Is that what happened? [*Laughter*] All right. You all did that fast too. It's like you guys do that for everything. Where are we going to lunch? [*Laughter*]

Q. Well, good afternoon, Mr. President. My name is Tarissa Young Clayborn. I am also a native of Illinois, so it's good to see you here. I am also a proud City Year AmeriCorps member at Hyde Park Elementary School here in Columbia.

The President. There you go. Fantastic. So there's a Hyde Park school here?

Q. Yes, sir.

The President. Because there's a Hyde Park in Chicago back home.

Q. Yes, there is a Hyde Park in Chicago. So my question for you——

The President. Look, he's like, "Hey-ay." [*Laughter*].

AmeriCorps/"My Brother's Keeper" Initiative/Criminal Justice Reform Efforts

Q. My question for you, Mr. President: How can City Year and other AmeriCorps programs support the goals of "My Brother's Keeper"?

The President. Well, first of all, City Year, AmeriCorps—for those young people who are thinking about public service or want to serve before they go on to graduate school or, in some cases, want to get involved before they go to college, AmeriCorps programs are an outstanding way to help fund your college education.

And City Year is one of the great AmeriCorps programs that we have. In addition to them all getting these spiffy red jackets, they end up being placed in communities all across the country doing—working in schools, working in communities in need, working on housing programs, all kinds of different stuff. And we're very proud of them.

"My Brother's Keepers"—the idea, the genesis of this came after the Trayvon Martin verdict, and obviously, there was great controversy about how the case was handled. And Eric Holder, by the way, has done an outstanding job getting our Justice Department to stay focused on the equal application of the law at local and State, as well as Federal levels.

But what I realized is, also, part of the goal of making sure that young African American men succeed, young Latino men succeed, young White men who don't have opportunity succeed, is to make sure that everybody has got a path that leads in a positive direction. And you can't wait until somebody is in trouble before you start intervening. You've got to start when they're younger.

You've got to—because the statistics show that if a child, by the time they're in third grade, is reading at grade level, they are far more likely to be able to graduate and succeed. If a child doesn't get suspended or disciplined in school, they're far less likely to get involved in the criminal justice system. If they get through high school without being involved in the criminal justice system, they are far less likely then to ever get involved in the criminal justice system.

So there are these points where we know that if you intervene in a timely way, it will make a difference. So what we've done is to get pledges from foundations and philanthropies. We've recruited businesses. We've gotten the NBA involved. We've gotten every agency in our Government involved. And we've gotten cities—and your mayor is participating in this,

so Columbia is participating in this—in coming up with local plans for how are we going to give opportunities, pathways for mentorship, apprenticeship, afterschool programs, job search, college prep, you name it. And each community is coming up with its own programs and plans, and then, we are partnering with them and helping match them up with folks in their area who are also interested in resourcing these initiatives.

And AmeriCorps, I think, is a key part of this because where a city or a State or a local community has a good plan, there is an opportunity for City Year or any other AmeriCorps program to be plugged in to that plan and become part of that plan. And my hope is, is that over the next several years and beyond my Presidency, because I'll stay involved in this, that in every city around the country, we start providing the kinds of help that is needed to make sure our young men are on the right track.

Now, I want to point out, by the way, I'm not neglecting young women, because, as you might expect, Michelle would not let me. [*Laughter*] So she has initiated programs for mentorships. And we've got an entire office in the White House for women and girls, that's focused on some of these same initiatives. But there is a particular challenge that we face for African American and Latino men, young men of color. And we've got to be honest about that. We're losing a large portion of our generation—or a big chunk of this generation and the previous generation.

I was talking to my—we have something called the Council of Economic Advisers. And even though there's been good job growth, really strong job growth, and unemployment has come down, we've gotten through the recession, the labor participation rate, the number of people who are actively seeking work, still is low compared to what it was 10 years ago. And we're asking ourselves why.

Now, part of it is, the population is getting older, so more people are retiring and not working. But that's not the only reason. In the African American community, a big reason is that you've got young people with criminal records who are finding themselves unemployable.

Now, that's not just bad for that individual, that's bad for their children, that's bad for the community. So this is part of the reason why it's so important for us to rethink how we approach nonviolent drug offenses, which is responsible for a lot of the churn of young men of color going through the criminal justice system. We've got to reexamining—reexamine how sentencing is working—and make sure it's done equally, by the way, because we know, statistically, it's been demonstrated that African American men are more likely to be arrested than their counterparts, more likely to be searched, more likely to be prosecuted, and more likely to get stiffer sentences despite the fact that they are no more likely to use drugs or deal drugs than the general population. And that's a problem.

So we're going to have to look at reforms there. But for those who are already in the pipeline, we've also got to think about, how do we help them get the kind of help that they need? And this is going to be something that I'm devoting a lot of energy to because this is not just a Black or Hispanic problem, this is an American problem. If you've got a big chunk of your workforce that is not working, and that's the youngest part of our—your workforce, and they're never contributing to the economy and not paying taxes and not supporting Social Security, then the whole economy grows slower. Everybody is worse off.

So this is not a issue just for one group. This is an issue for everybody. All right?

All right. [*Laughter*] All right. It's a young woman's turn. It's a young woman's turn. I'll be happy to sign your book. I know, you've been waving a lot, but it's not going to help. [*Laughter*] It's a young woman's turn. So let's see, this young lady way back in the back, right up there. Yes. I'm going to give—make the mike person get some exercise.

Presidential Pardons/White House Fellowship Program

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Good afternoon, and welcome to South Carolina. My

name is Simone Martin. I'm an attorney in this area with the Rutherford law firm. In fact, my boss, Representative and House Minority Leader Todd Rutherford, is sitting right over there—probably wondering why I'm not at the office. [*Laughter*] But nevertheless——

The President. Are you advertising for him? Was this, like, a whole—[*laughter*].

Q. No, I'm just trying to keep my job.

The President. Are you going to give, like, the number?

Q. No, I'm just trying to keep my job.

The President. "If you need representation"—[*laughter*]— "call Rutherford and Associates." [*Laughter*]

Q. Yes.

The President. All right, go ahead.

Q. I have two questions for you. I hope that you'll indulge me by addressing both. They're quick—or the second one is quick. The first one is, what can criminal defense attorneys, like myself and Mr. Rutherford, do to increase the number of Federal pardons that are granted? The second question is, to whom do I need to speak to improve my chances of being selected as a White House fellow? Can you help me out? [*Laughter*]

The President. Oh, okay. So the—well, let me address the non-self-interested question first. [*Laughter*] I just had a discussion about the criminal justice system. One of the extraordinary powers that a President has is the power to commute sentences or to pardon somebody who's already been sentenced. And when I came into office, for the first couple of years, I noticed that I wasn't really getting a lot of recommendations for pardons that I—at least not as many as I would expect. And many of them were from older folks. A lot of them were people just looking for a pardon so they could restore their gun rights. But sort of the more typical cases that I would have expected weren't coming up.

So I asked Attorney General Holder to work with me to set up a new office, or at least a new approach, inside the Justice Department. Because historically, what happened was the President would get a big stack of recommendations and then he could sign off on them—because obviously, I don't have time to go through each request. And so what we've done now is opened it up so that people are more aware of the process. And what you can do is contact the Justice Department. But essentially, we're now working with the NAACP, we're working with various public defenders' offices and community organizations just to make people aware that this is a process that you can go through.

Now, typically, we have a pretty strict set of criteria for whether we would even consider you for a pardon or a commutation.

Eric, I assume that that's available somewhere on the Justice Department website, is that correct?

Attorney General Eric H. Holder, Jr. Yes.

The President. Okay. So my first suggestion would be to go to the Justice Department website. If you—if the person doesn't qualify because they may have served time, but there were problems when they served time, or if it was a particularly violent crime, or they may just not fit the criteria where we would consider it—a lot of what we're focused on is nonviolent drug offenses where somebody might have gotten 25 years, and she was the girlfriend of somebody and somehow got caught up, and since then has led an exemplary life, but now really wants to be able to start a new career or something like that. That's the kind of person, typically, that would get through the process.

Now, in terms of the White House Fellows program, there's a whole White House Fellows committee, and it's complicated, and I don't have any pull on it. [*Laughter*] I do not put my thumb on the scale, because if I did, I'd get into trouble. Because then, people would say, he just put his friends on there. So you've got to go through the process. But you seem very well qualified, so good luck.

Q. Thank you. It was an honor.

The President. You're welcome. All right.

How many more questions do I got? I like to—it looks like I'm okay. All right, you know what, I'm going to just call on this gentleman. He's been, like, waving, and I've got to make sure he's not waving. Because out of his pe-

riphery I just saw him the whole time. All right. Let's make sure this question—go ahead.

Department of Justice Reports on the Shooting of Michael Brown and Police Department Practices in Ferguson, Missouri/Law Enforcement Reform Efforts

Q. First, I have two questions. Firstly, would you sign my book?

The President. Yes, I will sign your book.

Q. All right. And I'm a student currently studying at the University of South Carolina.

The President. Okay. Go Gamecocks! [*Laughter*]

Q. I see President Pastides is in the house, so it's good to see you, Mr. President.

The President. You're sucking up to the president, huh? [*Laughter*]

Q. My question, well, I guess it relates to the Michael Brown case. And I've just recently seen the report that suggested that there's been grave injustices going on in Ferguson. And I'm trying to figure out why the Attorney General, Eric Holder, refused to press charges against the police officer. Why didn't he face the Federal charges?

The President. Well, I will answer that question.

Q. And——

The President. Now, that was two questions right now.

Q. And I'm trying——

The President. No, that's it. [*Laughter*] You don't get a third question. Sit down. I called on you. Come on, sit down. [*Laughter*] See, this is how folks will get you. My reporter friends here, they're famous for doing that. They'll be, like, Mr. President, I've got a four-part question. [*Laughter*] So you only get two. I will sign your book.

With respect to Ferguson, keep in mind that there are two separate issues involved. The first is the specific case of Officer Wilson and Michael Brown. And that is typically a charge that would be brought and dealt with at the State level, the local level. The Federal Government has a role only if it can show that there was a significant miscarriage of the justice system and had clear evidence—now, I'm not being overly technical, but basically, the Federal jurisdiction here is to make sure that this wasn't just a completely wrong decision.

They don't retry the whole thing all over again. They look to see whether or not, at the State level, due process and the investigation was conducted. And the standard for overturning that or essentially coming in on top of the State decision is very high. The finding that was made was that it was not unreasonable to determine that there was not sufficient evidence to charge Officer Wilson.

Now, that was an objective, thorough, independent, Federal investigation. We may never know exactly what happened, but Officer Wilson, like anybody else who is charged with a crime, benefits from due process and a reasonable doubt standard. And if there is uncertainty about what happened, then you can't just charge him anyway just because what happened was tragic. That was the decision that was made. And I have complete confidence and stand fully behind the decision that was made by the Justice Department on that issue.

There is a second aspect to this, which is, how does the Ferguson Police Department and the government of Ferguson, the municipality, treat its African American citizens when it comes to law enforcement? And there, the finding was very clear, and it's available for everybody to read.

What we saw was that the Ferguson Police Department, in conjunction with the municipality, saw traffic stops, arrests, tickets as a revenue generator as opposed to serving the community, and that it systematically was biased against African Americans in that city who were stopped, harassed, mistreated, abused, called names, fined. And then, the—it was structured so that they would get caught up in paying more and more fines that they couldn't afford to pay or were made difficult for them to pay, which raised the amount of additional money that they had to pay. And it was an oppressive and abusive situation. And that is also the conclusion that the Justice Department arrived at.

The steps that now are to be taken is that the Justice Department has presented this

evidence to the City of Ferguson, and the City of Ferguson has a choice to make. They're basically going to have to decide, do they dispute the findings of the Justice Department—and I shouldn't comment on that aspect of it, although I will say that what's striking about the report is a lot of this was just using e-mails from the officials themselves. So it wasn't like folks were just making it up. But the City of Ferguson will now have to make a decision: Are they going to enter into some sort of agreement with the Justice Department to fix what is clearly a broken and racially biased system? Or if they don't, then the Justice Department has the capacity to sue the city for violations of the rights of the people of Ferguson.

And I—here's the thing that—here's the lesson that I would draw from this. I don't think that what happens in Ferguson is typical. I think that the overwhelming majority of law enforcement officers here in South Carolina and anyplace else—young man, sit down, I'm in the middle of talking. All right, thank you. The overwhelming number of law enforcement officers have a really hard, dangerous job, and they do it well, and they do it fairly, and they do it heroically. And I strongly believe that. And the overwhelming majority of law—police departments across the country are really thinking hard about, how do we make sure that we are protecting and serving everybody equally?

And we need to honor those folks, and we need to respect them, and not just assume that they've got ill will or they're doing a bad job.

But as is true in any part of our lives—as is true among politicians, as is true among business leaders, as is true among anybody—there are circumstances in which folks don't do a good job, or worse, are doing things that are really unlawful or unjust or unfair.

And what happened in Ferguson is not a complete aberration. It's not just a one-time thing. It's something that happens. And one of the things that I think frustrated the people of Ferguson, in addition to the specific case of Michael Brown, was this sense of, you know what, we've been putting up for this for years, and now when we start talking about it, everybody is pretending like it's just our imaginations, like we're just paranoid, we're just making this stuff up. And it turns out, they weren't just making it up. This was happening.

And so it's important for all of us then to figure out how do we move together to fix it. How do people of good will in law enforcement, in the community, everybody work to fix it and find concrete solutions, and to have accountability and oversight and transparency in terms of how law enforcement works?

And one of the great things that we did out of a tragic situation was, we were able to form a Task Force made up of law enforcement, police chiefs and community activists, including two of the activists who got the Ferguson marches and protests started. And they came up with a consensus document that was presented to me last week that was very specific in terms of how we can solve some of these problems: How we can make sure that police departments provide data about who they're stopping in traffic and data about how many people are killed in confrontations with the police, and how are those cases handled? And how are we training our law enforcement to respect the communities that they're serving? And how do we make sure we've got a diverse police force? And how do we look at new technologies like body cameras that may be helpful in this process? And how do we make sure that when something happens that may be an unjustified shoot, that people have confidence that the prosecutors are independent and there's a legitimacy to the process that they can trust.

That's good not just for the community, that's also good for the police department, so that they feel like they can get out from under a cloud if in fact the officer did the right thing. And if the officer did the wrong thing, that department should want to get rid of that officer, because they're going to undermine trust for the good cops that are out there doing a good job.

So the point is that now our task is to work together to solve the problem and not get caught up in either the cynicism that says this is never going to change because everybody is

racist—that's not a good solution. That's not what the folks in Selma did. They had confidence that they could change things and change people's hearts and minds. So you've got to have the ability to assume the best in people, including law enforcement, and work with them.

And the flipside is, the larger community has to be able to say, you know what, when a community says systematically that it's having some problems with its law enforcement, you've got to listen and pay attention and engage constructively to build trust and accountability so that it gets better.

So often we get caught up in this, and it becomes just a political football instead of us trying to solve the problem. And our goal should be to stop circumstances such as Ferguson or what happened in New York from happening again. That should be our number-one goal. And it is achievable, but we've got to be constructive in going forward.

All right. I've got one more question. Now, it's a woman's turn. Men, all put down—men got to put down their hands now. I'm looking around. It's not going to be a guy. Well, everybody, all right, we'll call on this young lady right here. [*Laughter*] Oh, I'm sorry. Go ahead.

Q. I am also a native of Chicago.

The President. Oh, well, I—now, I did not mean to call on three Chicagoans. [*Laughter*] I guess this is where everybody in Chicago moves to because it's too cold in Chicago. [*Laughter*] Go ahead.

Community-Oriented Policing/Gun Violence/Gun Control

Q. I am a senior majoring in psychology. One of my questions is, as you know, Chicago struggles with gun violence. So my question is, how—what organizations and programs are you guys designing to keep the youth off the streets and into better conditions? And how can we as a community help you guys execute those programs and designs and organizations?

The President. Well, I already mentioned "My Brother's Keepers," which is a major focus. Each community then is going to have its own—this is an example of where you got to work with the police department effectively and build trust. What we know is, things like community policing really work, where you're partnering with law enforcement; law enforcement gets to know young people when they're still in school before they're in trouble. People have confidence that law enforcement is there for them, not just in tamping down stuff, but to—in lifting people up. "My Brother's Keeper" and other initiatives are going to make a big difference in giving young people an opportunity.

Now, you mentioned gun violence, and that's probably the hardest issue to deal with. We have a long tradition of gun rights and gun ownership in this country. The Second Amendment has been interpreted by the Supreme Court to mean that people have the right to bear arms. There are a lot of law-abiding, responsible gun owners who use it for protection or sport. They handle their weapons properly. There are traditions of families passing down from father to son or daughter, you know, hunting. And that's important. That's part of our culture. That's part of who we are.

But what we also have to recognize is, is that our homicide rates are so much higher than other industrialized countries. I mean, by, like, a mile. And most of that is attributable to the easy, ready availability of firearms, particularly handguns.

Now, the courts and State legislatures—and I'm sure this is true in South Carolina—have greatly restricted the ability to put in place commonsense—some commonsense gun safety laws like background checks. I personally believe that it is not violating anybody's rights that if you want to purchase a gun, it should be at least your responsibility to get a background check so that we know you were not a violent felon or that you don't currently have a restraining order on you because you committed domestic abuse or—right now we don't know a lot of that. It's just not available. And that's—that doesn't make sense to me. And I'll be honest with you, I thought after what happened at Sandy Hook, that that would make us think about it.

The hardest day of my Presidency, and I've had some hard days, but nothing compares to being with the parents of 20 6-year-old kids, beautiful little kids, and some heroic teachers and administrators in that school, just 2, 3 days after they had been just gunned down in their own classroom. And you would have thought at that point, that has got to be enough of a motivator for us to want to do something about this. And we couldn't get it done. I mean, there was just—at least at the congressional level.

So what we've done is, we have tried as much as we can administratively to implement background laws checks and to make sure that we're working with those States and cities and jurisdictions that are interested and willing to partner with us to crack down on the illegal use of firearms, particularly handguns.

But I'll be honest with you. In the absence of more what I would consider heroic and courageous stances from our legislators both at the State level and the Federal level, it is hard to reduce the easy availability of guns. And as long as there—as long as you can go on—into some neighborhoods and it is easier for you to buy a firearm than it is for you to buy a book—there are neighborhoods where it's easier for you to buy a handgun and clips than it is for you to buy a fresh vegetable—as long as that's the case, we're going to continue to see unnecessary violence.

But I guess I'll end by saying this. Despite those frustrations, despite the failure of Congress to act, despite the failure of too many State legislators to act—in fact, in some places it goes the opposite direction, people just say well, we should have firearms in kindergarten and we should have machine guns in bars. You think I'm exaggerating—I mean, you look at some of these laws that come up.

Despite those frustrations, I would say it is still within our control to reduce the incidence of handgun violence by making sure that our young people understand that that is not a sign of strength, that violence is not the answer for whatever frustrations they may have or conflicts they may have, and work diligently with our young people and in our communities to try to put them on a positive path.

And the people who are going to lead that process are the young people who are here today. You are going to have more impact on the young people coming up behind you than anybody else. And the kind of example you set and the willingness of all of you to get involved and engaged in a concrete way, to remake our world together, that's what's going to determine the future of America. And looking out at all of you, you're what makes me optimistic.

Thank you very much, Benedict College. Appreciate you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:10 p.m. in the Benjamin E. Mays Human Resources Center. In his remarks, he referred to Tiana Cox, student, Benedict College; Mayor Terrence D. Culbreath of Johnston, SC; Mayor William Johnson of Holly Hill, SC; Harris Pastides, president, University of South Carolina; Darren Wilson, officer, Ferguson, MO, Police Department; and Brittany Packnett, executive director, Teach For America St. Louis, and Rasheen Aldridge, Jr., director, Young Activists United St. Louis, in their capacity as members of the President's Task Force on 21st-Century Policing.

The President's Weekly Address
March 7, 2015

Hi, everybody. Sunday is International Women's Day, a day to celebrate remarkable women and girls worldwide and to rededicate ourselves to defending the fundamental rights and dignity of all people.

That's why, this week, Michelle and I launched a new initiative on a topic that's close to both our hearts: girls' education. It's called "Let Girls Learn," and its goal is to help more girls around the world go to school and stay in school. Right now 62 million girls who should be in school are not. And that's not an accident. It's the direct result of barriers, large and small, that stand in the way of girls who want to learn.

Maybe their families can't afford the school fees. Maybe the risk of being hurt or kidnapped or even killed by men who will do anything to stop girls from learning is just too great. Or maybe they aren't in school because they're expected to get married and become mothers while they're still teenagers or even earlier. In too many parts of the world, girls are still valued more for their bodies than for their minds. That's just plain wrong. And we all have to do more to stop it.

That's the idea behind "Let Girls Learn." We're making it clear to any country that's our partner—or that wants to be our partner—that they need to get serious about increasing the number of girls in school. Our diplomats and development experts are already hard at work. Our Peace Corps volunteers will play a big role too. And we're putting our partnerships with NGOs, businesses, and foundations to work on behalf of girls everywhere.

I come to this issue as the leader of the world's largest economy and Commander in Chief of the world's most powerful military, and I am convinced that a world in which girls are educated is a safer, more stable, more prosperous place. When girls are educated, their future children are healthier and better nourished. Their future wages increase, which in turn strengthens their families' security. National economic growth gets a boost too. And places where women and girls are treated as full and equal citizens tend to be more stable and more democratic.

I also come to this issue as the father of two wonderful young women. And I know that there are lots of girls just like Malia and Sasha out there, girls who are funny and caring and inquisitive and strong and have so much to offer the world.

It's a privilege to be the parent of girls. And we want to make sure that no girl out there is denied her chance to learn, that no girl is prevented from making her unique contributions to the world. Because every girl—every girl—deserves our respect. And every girl deserves an education.

Thanks, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 1:55 p.m. on March 6 in Room 131 of the Benjamin E. Mays Human Resources Center at Benedict College in Columbia, SC, for broadcast on March 7. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 6, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on March 7.

Remarks Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Selma-to-Montgomery Marches for Voting Rights in Selma, Alabama
March 7, 2015

Audience member. We love you, President Obama!

The President. Well, you know I love you back.

It is a rare honor in this life to follow one of your heroes. And John Lewis is one of my heroes.

Now, I have to imagine that when a younger John Lewis woke up that morning 50 years ago and made his way to Brown Chapel, heroics were not on his mind. A day like this was not on his mind. Young folks with bedrolls and backpacks were milling about. Veterans of the movement trained newcomers in the tactics of nonviolence, the right way to protect yourself when attacked. A doctor described what tear gas does to the body, while marchers scribbled down instructions for contacting their loved ones. The air was thick with doubt, anticipation, and fear. And they comforted themselves with the final verse of the final hymn they sung: "No matter what may be the test, God will take care of you; Lean, weary one, upon His breast, God will take care of you."

And then, his knapsack stocked with an apple, a toothbrush, and a book on government—all you need for a night behind bars—John Lewis led them out of the church on a mission to change America.

President and Mrs. Bush, Governor Bentley, Mayor Evans, Congresswoman Sewell, Reverend Strong, Members of Congress, elected officials, foot soldiers, friends, fellow Americans: As John noted, there are places and moments in America where this Nation's destiny has been decided. Many are sites of war: Concord and Lexington, Appomattox, Gettysburg. Others are sites that symbolize the daring of America's character: Independence Hall and Seneca Falls, Kitty Hawk and Cape Canaveral.

Selma is such a place. In one afternoon 50 years ago, so much of our turbulent history—the stain of slavery and anguish of civil war, the yoke of segregation and tyranny of Jim Crow, the death of four little girls in Birmingham, and the dream of a Baptist preacher—all that history met on this bridge.

It was not a clash of armies, but a clash of wills; a contest to determine the true meaning of America. And because of men and women like John Lewis, Joseph Lowery, Hosea Williams, Amelia Boynton, Diane Nash, Ralph Abernathy, C.T. Vivian, Andrew Young, Fred Shuttlesworth, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., so many others, the idea of a just America and a fair America, an inclusive America and a generous America—that idea ultimately triumphed.

Now, as is true across the landscape of American history, we cannot examine this moment in isolation. The march on Selma was part of a broader campaign that spanned generations, the leaders that day part of a long line of heroes.

We gather here to celebrate them. We gather here to honor the courage of ordinary Americans willing to endure billy clubs and the chastening rod, tear gas and the trampling hoof; men and women who despite the gush of blood and splintered bone would stay true to their north star and keep marching towards justice.

They did as Scripture instructed: "Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer." And in the days to come, they went back again and again. When the trumpet call sounded for more to join, the people came: Black and White, young and old, Christian and Jew, waving the American flag, singing the same anthems full of faith and hope. A White newsman, Bill Plante, who covered the marches then and who is with us here today, quipped that the growing number of White people lowered the quality of the singing. [*Laughter*] To those who marched, though, those old gospel songs must have never sounded so sweet.

In time, their chorus would well up and reach President Johnson. And he would send them protection and speak to the Nation, echoing their call for America and the world to hear: "We shall overcome." What enormous faith these men and women had: faith in God, but also faith in America.

The Americans who crossed this bridge, they were not physically imposing, but they gave courage to millions. They held no elected office, but they led a nation. They marched as Americans who had endured hundreds of years of brutal violence, countless daily indignities. But they didn't seek special treatment, just the equal treatment promised to them almost a century before.

What they did here will reverberate through the ages. Not because the change they won was preordained, not because their victory was complete, but because they proved that nonviolent change is possible, that love and hope can conquer hate.

As we commemorate their achievement, we are well served to remember that, at the time of the marches, many in power condemned rather than praised them. Back then, they were called Communists or half-breeds or outside agitators, sexual and moral degenerates, and worse. They were called everything but the name their parents gave them. Their faith was questioned, their lives were threatened, their patriotism challenged.

And yet what could be more American than what happened in this place? What could more profoundly vindicate the idea of America than plain and humble people—unsung, the downtrodden, the dreamers not of high station, not born to wealth or privilege, not of one religious tradition but many—coming together to shape their country's course?

What greater expression of faith in the American experiment than this? What greater

form of patriotism is there than the belief that America is not yet finished, that we are strong enough to be self-critical, that each successive generation can look upon our imperfections and decide that it is in our power to remake this Nation to more closely align with our highest ideals?

That's why their Selma is not some outlier in the American experience. That's why it's not a museum or a static monument to behold from a distance. It is instead the manifestation of a creed written into our founding documents: "We the People . . . in order to form a more perfect Union." "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal."

These are not just words. They're a living thing, a call to action, a roadmap for citizenship, and an insistence in the capacity of free men and women to shape our own destiny. For Founders like Franklin and Jefferson, for leaders like Lincoln and FDR, the success of our experiment in self-government rested on engaging all of our citizens in this work. And that's what we celebrate here in Selma. That's what this movement was all about, one leg in our long journey toward freedom.

The American instinct that led these young men and women to pick up the torch and cross this bridge, that's the same instinct that moved patriots to choose revolution over tyranny. It's the same instinct that drew immigrants from across oceans and the Rio Grande; the same instinct that led women to reach for the ballot, workers to organize against an unjust status quo; the same instinct that led us to plant a flag at Iwo Jima and on the surface of the Moon.

It's the idea held by generations of citizens who believed that America is a constant work in progress, who believed that loving this country requires more than singing its praises or avoiding uncomfortable truths. It requires the occasional disruption, the willingness to speak out for what is right, to shake up the status quo. That's America.

That's what makes us unique. That's what cements our reputation as a beacon of opportunity. Young people behind the Iron Curtain would see Selma and eventually tear down that wall. Young people in Soweto would hear Bobby Kennedy talk about ripples of hope and eventually banish the scourge of apartheid. Young people in Burma went to prison rather than submit to military rule. They saw what John Lewis had done. From the streets of Tunis to the Maidan in Ukraine, this generation of young people can draw strength from this place, where the powerless could change the world's greatest power and push their leaders to expand the boundaries of freedom. They saw that idea made real right here in Selma, Alabama. They saw that idea manifest itself here in America.

Because of campaigns like this, a Voting Rights Act was passed. Political and economic and social barriers came down. And the change these men and women wrought is visible here today in the presence of African Americans who run boardrooms, who sit on the bench, who serve in elected office from small towns to big cities, from the Congressional Black Caucus all the way to the Oval Office.

Because of what they did, the doors of opportunity swung open not just for Black folks, but for every American. Women marched through those doors. Latinos marched through those doors. Asian Americans, gay Americans, Americans with disabilities—they all came through those doors. Their endeavors gave the entire South the chance to rise again, not by reasserting the past, but by transcending the past. What a glorious thing, Dr. King might say. And what a solemn debt we owe. Which leads us to ask, just how might we repay that debt?

First and foremost, we have to recognize that one day's commemoration, no matter how special, is not enough. If Selma taught us anything, it's that our work is never done. The American experiment in self-government gives work and purpose to each generation.

Selma teaches us as well that action requires that we shed our cynicism. For when it comes to the pursuit of justice, we can afford neither complacency nor despair. Just this week, I was asked whether I thought the Department of Justice's Ferguson report shows that, with respect to race, little has changed in this country. And I understood the question; the report's

narrative was sadly familiar. It evoked the kind of abuse and disregard for citizens that spawned the civil rights movement. But I rejected the notion that nothing's changed. What happened in Ferguson may not be unique, but it's no longer endemic. It's no longer sanctioned by law or by custom. And before the civil rights movement, it most surely was.

We do a disservice to the cause of justice by intimating that bias and discrimination are immutable, that racial division is inherent in America. If you think nothing's changed in the past 50 years, ask somebody who lived through the Selma or Chicago or Los Angeles of the 1950s. Ask the female CEO who once might have been assigned to the secretarial pool if nothing's changed. Ask your gay friend if it's easier to be out and proud in America now than it was 30 years ago. To deny this progress, this hard-won progress—our progress—would be to rob us of our own agency, our own capacity, our responsibility to do what we can to make America better.

Of course, a more common mistake is to suggest that Ferguson is an isolated incident, that racism is banished, that the work that drew men and women to Selma is now complete, and that whatever racial tensions remain are a consequence of those seeking to play the "race card" for their own purposes. We don't need a Ferguson report to know that's not true. We just need to open our eyes and our ears and our hearts to know that this Nation's racial history still casts its long shadow upon us.

We know the march is not yet over. We know the race is not yet won. We know that reaching that blessed destination where we are judged, all of us, by the content of our character requires admitting as much, facing up to the truth. "We are capable of bearing a great burden," James Baldwin once wrote, "once we discover that the burden is reality and arrive where reality is."

There's nothing America can't handle if we actually look squarely at the problem. And this is work for all Americans, not just some. Not just Whites. Not just Blacks. If we want to honor the courage of those who marched that day, then all of us are called to possess their moral imagination. All of us will need to feel as they did the fierce urgency of now. All of us need to recognize as they did that change depends on our actions, on our attitudes, the things we teach our children. And if we make such an effort, no matter how hard it may sometimes seem, laws can be passed and consciences can be stirred and consensus can be built.

With such an effort, we can make sure our criminal justice system serves all and not just some. Together, we can raise the level of mutual trust that policing is built on: the idea that police officers are members of the community they risk their lives to protect. And citizens in Ferguson and New York and Cleveland, they just want the same thing young people here marched for 50 years ago: the protection of the law. Together, we can address unfair sentencing and overcrowded prisons and the stunted circumstances that rob too many boys of the chance to become men and rob the Nation of too many men who could be good dads and good workers and good neighbors.

With effort, we can roll back poverty and the roadblocks to opportunity. Americans don't accept a free ride for anybody, nor do we believe in equality of outcomes. But we do expect equal opportunity. And if we really mean it, if we're not just giving lip service to it, but if we really mean it and are willing to sacrifice for it, then, yes, we can make sure every child gets an education suitable to this new century, one that expands imaginations and lifts sights and gives those children the skills they need. We can make sure every person willing to work has the dignity of a job and a fair wage and a real voice and sturdier rungs on that ladder into the middle class.

And with effort, we can protect the foundation stone of our democracy for which so many marched across this bridge, and that is the right to vote. Right now, in 2015, 50 years after Selma, there are laws across this country designed to make it harder for people to vote. As we speak, more such laws are being proposed. Meanwhile, the Voting Rights Act, the culmination of so much blood, so much sweat and tears, the product of so much sacrifice in the face of wanton violence, the Voting Rights Act

stands weakened, its future subject to political rancor.

How can that be? The Voting Rights Act was one of the crowning achievements of our democracy, the result of Republican and Democratic efforts. President Reagan signed its renewal when he was in office. President George W. Bush signed its renewal when he was in office. One hundred Members of Congress have come here today to honor people who were willing to die for the right to protect it. If we want to honor this day, let that hundred go back to Washington and gather 400 more, and together, pledge to make it their mission to restore that law this year. That's how we honor those on this bridge.

Of course, our democracy is not the task of Congress alone or the courts alone or even the President alone. If every new voter suppression law was struck down today, we would still have, here in America, one of the lowest voting rates among free peoples. Fifty years ago, registering to vote here in Selma and much of the South meant guessing the number of jellybeans in a jar, the number of bubbles on a bar of soap. It meant risking your dignity and sometimes your life.

What's our excuse today for not voting? How do we so casually discard the right for which so many fought? How do we so fully give away our power, our voice, in shaping America's future? Why are we pointing to somebody else when we could take the time just to go to the polling places? We give away our power.

Fellow marchers, so much has changed in 50 years. We have endured war, and we've fashioned peace. We've seen technological wonders that touch every aspect of our lives. We take for granted conveniences that our parents could have scarcely imagined. But what has not changed is the imperative of citizenship, that willingness of a 26-year-old deacon or a Unitarian minister or a young mother of five to decide they loved this country so much that they'd risk everything to realize its promise. That's what it means to love America. That's what it means to believe in America. That's what it means when we say America is exceptional.

For we were born of change. We broke the old aristocracies, declaring ourselves entitled, not by bloodline, but endowed by our Creator with certain inalienable rights. We secure our rights and responsibilities through a system of self-government, of and by and for the people. That's why we argue and fight with so much passion and conviction, because we know our efforts matter. We know America is what we make of it.

Look at our history. We are Lewis and Clark and Sacajawea, pioneers who braved the unfamiliar, followed by a stampede of farmers and miners and entrepreneurs and hucksters. [*Laughter*] That's our spirit. That's who we are.

We are Sojourner Truth and Fannie Lou Hamer, women who could do as much as any man and then some. And we're Susan B. Anthony, who shook the system until the law reflected that truth. That is our character.

We're the immigrants who stowed away on ships to reach these shores, the huddled masses yearning to breathe free: Holocaust survivors, Soviet defectors, the Lost Boys of Sudan. We're the hopeful strivers who cross the Rio Grande because we want our kids to know a better life. That's how we came to be.

We're the slaves who built the White House and the economy of the South. We're the ranch hands and cowboys who opened up the West, the countless laborers who laid rail and raised skyscrapers and organized for workers' rights.

We're the fresh-faced GIs who fought to liberate a continent. And we're the Tuskeegee Airmen and the Navajo Code Talkers and the Japanese Americans who fought for this country even as their own liberty had been denied.

We're the firefighters who rushed into those buildings on 9/11, the volunteers who signed up to fight in Afghanistan and Iraq. We're the gay Americans whose blood ran in the streets of San Francisco and New York, just as blood ran down this bridge.

We are storytellers, writers, poets, artists who abhor unfairness and despise hypocrisy and give voice to the voiceless and tell truths that need to be told.

We're the inventors of gospel and jazz and blues, bluegrass and country and hip-hop and rock and roll, and our very own sound with all the sweet sorrow and reckless joy of freedom.

We are Jackie Robinson, enduring scorn and spiked cleats and pitches coming straight to his head, and stealing home in the World Series anyway.

We are the people Langston Hughes wrote of who "build our temples for tomorrow, strong as we know how." We are the people Emerson wrote of, "who for truth and honor's sake stand fast and suffer long," who are "never tired, so long as we can see far enough."

That's what America is. Not stock photos or airbrushed history or feeble attempts to define some of us as more American than others. We respect the past, but we don't pine for the past. We don't fear the future, we grab for it. America is not some fragile thing. We are large, in the words of Whitman, containing multitudes. We are boisterous and diverse and full of energy, perpetually young in spirit. That's why someone like John Lewis at the ripe old age of 25 could lead a mighty march.

And that's what the young people here today and listening all across the country must take away from this day. You are America, unconstrained by habit and convention, unencumbered by what is, because you're ready to seize what ought to be.

For everywhere in this country, there are first steps to be taken, there's new ground to cover, there are more bridges to be crossed. And it is you, the young and fearless at heart, the most diverse and educated generation in our history, who the Nation is waiting to follow.

Because Selma shows us that America is not the project of any one person. Because the single most powerful word in our democracy is the word "we." "We the People." "We Shall Overcome." "Yes, We Can." That word is owned by no one. It belongs to everyone. Oh, what a glorious task we are given, to continually try to improve this great Nation of ours.

Fifty years from Bloody Sunday, our march is not yet finished, but we're getting closer. Two hundred and thirty-nine years after this Nation's founding, our Union is not yet perfect, but we are getting closer. Our job's easier because somebody already got us through that first mile, somebody already got us over that bridge. When it feels the road is too hard, when the torch we've been passed feels too heavy, we will remember these early travelers and draw strength from their example and hold firmly to the words of the prophet Isaiah:

> Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength.
> They will soar on the wings like eagles.
> They will run and not grow weary.
> They will walk and not be faint.

We honor those who walked so we could run. We must run so our children soar. And we will not grow weary, for we believe in the power of an awesome God and we believe in this country's sacred promise.

May He bless those warriors of justice no longer with us and bless the United States of America. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:17 p.m. at the Edmund Pettus Bridge. In his remarks, he referred to former President George W. Bush and former First Lady Laura Bush; Leodis Strong, pastor, Brown Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Selma, AL; civil rights activists Joseph E. Lowery, Amelia Boynton Robinson, Diane Nash, Cordy Tindell "C.T." Vivian, and Andrew J. Young; and Bill Plante, senior White House correspondent, CBS News.

Statement on International Women's Day
March 8, 2015

As half the planet, women make immeasurable contributions to our world. They are entrepreneurs, farmers, educators, scientists, artists, soldiers, mothers, heads of state—the list is endless. Without them, economies would collapse, political systems would deteriorate,

and families and communities would fall apart. Yet in too many places, women are treated as second-class citizens, their abilities are undervalued, and their human rights—the right to learn, to express themselves, to live free from violence, to choose whether and whom to marry—are routinely violated.

This gap between women's inherent value and how many of them are treated every day is one of the great injustices of our time. On this International Women's Day, we recommit ourselves to closing that gap. That means supporting girls' education. Right now 62 million girls worldwide who should be in school aren't. Millions more are at risk of losing their access to education. This week, Michelle and I announced an initiative called "Let Girls Learn" to help dismantle the barriers—economic, political, and cultural—that stand in the way of girls who want to learn.

I'm convinced that a world in which women and girls are treated as equal to men and boys is safer, more stable, and more prosperous. Beyond those tangible benefits, this is simply a matter of right and wrong. Women and girls are human beings, full and equal in rights and dignity. They deserve to be treated that way, everywhere, every day. My administration will continue working to make that vision a reality.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Blocking Property and Suspending Entry of Certain Persons Contributing to the Situation in Venezuela
March 8, 2015

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Mr. President:)

Pursuant to the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701 *et seq.*) (IEEPA), I hereby report that I have issued an Executive Order (the "order") declaring a national emergency with respect to the unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States posed by the situation in Venezuela. The order does not target the people of Venezuela, but rather is aimed at persons involved in or responsible for the erosion of human rights guarantees, persecution of political opponents, curtailment of press freedoms, use of violence and human rights violations and abuses in response to antigovernment protests, and arbitrary arrest and detention of antigovernment protestors, as well as the exacerbating presence of significant public corruption in that country. In addition to taking action under IEEPA, the order implements the Venezuela Defense of Human Rights and Civil Society Act of 2014 (Public Law 113–278) (the "Act"), which I signed on December 18, 2014, and delegates certain of its authorities.

The order blocks the property and interests in property of persons listed in an Annex to the order and would block the property and interests in property of any person determined by the Secretary of the Treasury, in consultation with the Secretary of State:

- to be responsible for or complicit in, or responsible for ordering, controlling, or otherwise directing, or to have participated in, directly or indirectly, any of the following in or in relation to Venezuela:
- actions or policies that undermine democratic processes or institutions;
    - significant acts of violence or conduct that constitutes a serious abuse or violation of human rights, including against persons involved in antigovernment protests in Venezuela in or since February 2014;
    - actions that prohibit, limit, or penalize the exercise of freedom of expression or peaceful assembly; or
    - public corruption by senior officials within the Government of Venezuela;
- to be a current or former leader of an entity that has, or whose members have, engaged in any activity described in the order or of an entity whose property and

interests in property are blocked pursuant to the order;

- to be a current or former official of the Government of Venezuela;
- to have materially assisted, sponsored, or provided financial, material, or technological support for, or goods or services to or in support of:
  - a person whose property and interests in property are blocked pursuant to the order; or
  - an activity described in the order; or
- to be owned or controlled by, or to have acted or purported to act for or on behalf of, directly or indirectly, any person whose property and interests in property are blocked pursuant to the order.

In addition, the order suspends entry into the United States of any alien listed in the Annex or determined to meet one or more of the above criteria.

I have delegated to the Secretary of the Treasury the authority, in consultation with the Secretary of State, to take such actions, including the promulgation of rules and regulations, and to employ all powers granted to the President by IEEPA and relevant provisions of the Act as may be necessary to carry out the purposes of the order, other than the provision suspending entry into the United States of certain aliens, and to carry out the related provisions of the Act. I have delegated to the Secretary of State the authority to take such actions, including the promulgation of rules and regulations, and to employ all powers granted to the President by IEEPA and relevant provisions of the Act as may be necessary to carry out the provision of the order and the Act suspending entry into the United States of certain aliens and the authority to issue waivers under the Act. All executive agencies are directed to take all appropriate measures within their authority to carry out the provisions of the order.

I am enclosing a copy of the Executive Order I have issued.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to John A. Boehner, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate. The letter referred to Executive Order 13692, which is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume. The letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 9.

Remarks at the National League of Cities Congressional City Conference
March 9, 2015

The President. Thank you! Hello, mayors! Everybody, have a seat. Thank you so much. Thank you. Thank you, Mayor Becker, for the wonderful introduction and the great job that you are doing every single day. Everybody, have a seat. [*Laughter*] Sit down, take——

Audience member. I love you!

The President. I love you too.

It is great to be with the National League of Cities. We have about 2,000 local leaders here. We've got mayors, we've got councilmembers. We've got Republicans, Democrats, Independents.

Audience member. Independents—[*inaudible*].

The President. [*Laughter*] We've got some small-town leaders, we've got some bustling city leaders. But you all have something in common, and that is that every day you wake up ready to solve problems, and you know that people are depending on you to make sure your streets are safe, your schools are strong, trash gets picked up, roads getting cleared. You have to spend time thinking in very practical terms about whether people are getting good jobs and whether they're able to support a family.

So you don't have a lot of time for gridlock. You've got to get the job done. You don't have a lot of time for hot air. [*Laughter*] You—peo-

ple are expecting you to deliver. And you're part of the reason why America is coming back.

Last month, our economy created nearly 300,000 new jobs. Unemployment rate ticked down to 5.5 percent, which is the lowest it's been since the spring of 2008. And all told, businesses have now created over 12 million jobs over the last 5 years—12 million. And the good news is, the pace has been picking up. Our businesses have now added more than 200,000 jobs a month over the last year, and we have not seen a streak like that in almost 40 years.

So we're well positioned, we're in a good spot to take advantage of not just next year or the year after, but decades to come. And we've got to keep positioning ourselves for a constantly changing global economy. That's something all of you understand. It doesn't matter whether you're the mayor of a big city or a small town. You understand that the economy is dynamic now, and you can't just stand still, you can't rest on your laurels.

And you also understand we've got to stay focused on middle class economics, the notion that our country does best when everybody is getting a fair shot and everybody is doing their fair share and everybody is playing by the same set of rules. And I have to say, the National League of Cities has been a great partner in this work. A great partner.

We've worked with many of you to lift the minimum wage while we're waiting for Congress to do something. [*Laughter*] And over the past 2 years, more than 20 cities and counties have taken action to raise workers' wages. You've passed sick leave laws, you've answered the Mayors' Challenge To End Veterans Homelessness. Nearly 200 leaders have stepped up to answer what we're calling "My Brother's Keeper," the challenge to create more pathways to success for our young people. Some of you are supporting our efforts to secure new agreements for trade that's free and fair in some of the world's fastest growing markets, because you know that there are businesses, large and small, in your communities that can be impacted, and we want to make sure our workers and our businesses can compete on a level playing field.

So there's a lot of work we've done together and a lot more we can do together to make sure that more Americans benefit from a 21st-century economy. And nobody knows for sure which industries are going to be generating all the good-paying jobs of the future. What we do know is we want them here in America, and we want them in your town, we want them in your cities, we want them in your counties. That's what we know.

So today I want to focus on something very specific, and that is, how can we work together to build a pipeline of tech workers for this new economy? Now, this doesn't just apply to San Francisco. This doesn't just apply to Boston. It applies across the board in every part of the country. Right now America has more job openings than at any point since 2001. So think of it—[*applause*]—that's good news, we've got a lot of job openings. Here's the catch: Over half a million of those jobs are technology jobs. A lot of those jobs didn't even exist 10, 20 years ago, titles like Mobile App Developer—[*laughter*]—or Userface Designer.

Now, we tend to think that all these tech jobs are in Silicon Valley, at companies like Google and eBay, or maybe in a few spots like Austin, Texas, where you've seen a tech industry thrive. But the truth is, two-thirds of these jobs are in non-high-tech industries like health care or manufacturing or banking, which means they're in every corner of the country.

See, there's no industry that hasn't been touched by this technology revolution. And what's more, a lot of these jobs don't require a 4-year degree in computer science, they don't require you be an engineer. Folks can get the skills they need for these jobs in newer, streamlined, faster training programs.

What's more, these tech jobs pay 50-percent more than the average private sector wage, which means they're a ticket into the middle class. And you all know better than anybody, this is an economic development issue, because when companies have job openings that they cannot fill, that costs them money. It costs them market share; it costs them exports. So

they go looking for where they can find the people they need. And if we don't have them, that makes it harder for us to keep and attract good jobs to our shores or to your communities.

When these jobs go unfilled, it's a missed opportunity for the workers, but it's also a missed opportunity for your city, your community, your county, your State, and our Nation. And here's something else: If we're not producing enough tech workers, over time that's going to threaten our leadership in global innovation, which is the bread and butter of the 21st-century economy.

America is where entrepreneurs come to start the greatest startups, where the most cutting-edge ideas are born and are launched. But historically, that's because we've got great universities, we've got great research, and we've got great workers. And if we lose those assets, they'll start drifting somewhere else, companies will get started somewhere else, and the great new industries of the future may not be here in America.

Now, I refuse to accept that future. I want Americans to win the race for the kinds of discoveries that release new jobs, whether it's converting sunlight into liquid fuel or leading a new era in personalized medicine or pushing out into the solar system, not just to visit, but to stay. We've got just this incredible set of opportunities, but we've got to have the workers for us to take advantage of it.

So today I'm announcing a new initiative that we're calling TechHire. TechHire. And it's going to be driven by leaders like you. So there are three big components to this.

First, we already have over 20 cities, States, and rural communities, from Louisville to Delaware, who have signed on to fill tech openings—they've already got more than 120,000 of them—in bold new ways. Let me give you an example. Employers tend to recruit people with technology degrees from 4-year colleges, and that means sometimes they end up screening out good candidates who don't necessarily have traditional qualifications; they may have learned at a community college, or they may have served in our military. They've got the talent, but employers are missing them.

So TechHire communities are going to help employers link up and find and hire folks based on their actual skills and not just their résumés. It—because it turns out, it doesn't matter where you learned code, it just matters how good you are in writing code. If you can do the job, you should get the job.

And while 4-year degrees in engineering and computer science are still important, we have the opportunity to promote programs that we call, for example, coding boot camp, or online courses that have pioneered new ways to teach tech skills in a fraction of the time and the costs. And these new models have the potential to reach underserved communities: to reach women, who are still underrepresented in this sector; and minorities, who are still underrepresented in this sector; and veterans, who we know can do the job; and lower income workers, who might have the aptitude for tech jobs, but they don't know that these jobs are within reach.

Understand, within the tech sector, there are going to be tiers of jobs, all of which are tech, but they're not all the same. All right? There's still going to be the place—we still have to produce more engineers and advanced degrees in computer science at the upper tier, but there's all kinds of stuff that's being done within companies at different sectors that can create great careers for a long of people.

And so what TechHire is going to do is to help local leaders connect the job openings to the training programs to the jobs. And if you're not already involved in this, you've got to get involved, because your community needs this just like everybody else does. So that's the first component.

Second thing we're doing: We've got private-sector leaders who are supporting everything from scholarships to job-matching tools. So companies like LinkedIn are going to use data to help identify the skills that employers need. Companies like Capital One are going to help recruit, train, and employ more new tech workers, not out of charity, but because it's a smart business decision.

All of this is going to help us to match the job to the worker. And the private sector will be involved in this out of self-interest, but it means that you, the leaders at the local level, are going to have to help create these platforms and facilitate this kind of job match.

Finally, we're launching a $100 million competition for innovative ideas to train and employ people who are underrepresented in tech. At a time when we all lead digital lives, anybody who has the drive and the will to get into this field should have a way to do so, a pathway to do so.

So my administration is committed to this initiative. We've got a lot of private and nonprofit sectors leading the way. We want to get more onboard. But ultimately, success is going to rest on folks like you—on mayors, councilmembers, local leaders—because you've got the power to bring your communities together and seize this incredible economic development opportunity that could change the way we think about training and hiring the workers of tomorrow. And the good news is, these workers may emerge from the unlikeliest places.

So let me wrap up with just the example of one person, a woman named LaShana Lewis. Where's LaShana? She's here today. I hear she was here. There she is over there. There's LaShana.

Now, the reason LaShana's story is so relevant is, LaShana grew up in East St. Louis. She had a passion for computers. But because of circumstances, constraints—she wasn't born with a silver spoon in her mouth—she wasn't able to get a college degree, and because she didn't have a college degree, she couldn't even get an interview for a tech job, despite her coding skills. So she was working as a bus driver, and she was working in entry-level jobs.

But LaShana apparently is a stubborn person—[*laughter*]—which is good. Sometimes, you need to be stubborn. So she refused to give up on her dream, and she used her free time to teach herself new computer skills. And she started going to a coding "meetup" that was run by LaunchCode, which is a non-for-profit that finds talented people across St. Louis and gives them the training and credibility for the tech jobs employers are desperately needing to fill in—as we speak. So LaShana had the skills. LaunchCode went to bat for her. And today, she's a system engineer at MasterCard.

Now, LaShana—it's a great story, but understand this—MasterCard wants to hire more folks like LaShana. Moreover, 40 percent of LaunchCode's first class came in unemployed. Ninety percent of its graduates were hired full time, with an average starting salary of $50,000 a year.

So that's what's already happening, but it's happening at a small scale. And what we need to do is expand it. And in each of your communities, there is an opportunity to find talent like LaShana, help them get credentialed, help them focus the skills they've already got, work with non-for-profits, work with businesses, match them up. Next thing you know, you've got a systems engineer; they've got a good job. Companies are excited; they're able to expand. Your tax base is improving. You can reach out and train even more folks. You get on a virtuous cycle of change.

And it doesn't require huge amounts of money. It requires some planning and organization and coordination, and the Federal Government is going to be your partner in this process.

So we've got to create more stories like LaShana's. And if we do, then we are going to more effectively capture what is the boundless energy and talent of Americans who have the will, but sometimes need a little help clearing out the way. Help them get on a path to fill the new jobs of this new century.

And that's what middle class economics looks like. I said this weekend that Americans don't believe in anybody getting a free ride, and Americans don't believe in equality of outcomes. We understand that you've got—we've got to work hard in this country. You don't just sit around waiting for something to happen, you've got to go get it.

But we do believe in equal opportunity. We do believe in expanding opportunity to everybody who's willing to work hard. We do believe that, in this country, no matter what you

look like or where you come from, how you started out, if you're willing to put in some blood and sweat and tears, you should be able to make it and get a decent job and get a decent wage and send your kids to college and retire with dignity and respect and have health care you can count on and have a safe community.

You—we do believe that. And that's what I'm committed to doing these last 2 years. And I'm going to need the League of Cities to help me do it; work with you to build an economy where everybody shares in America's prosperity and everybody is contributing to America's prosperity.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:39 a.m. at the Washington Marriott Wardman Park hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Ralph E. Becker, Jr., of Salt Lake City, UT.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With President Donald Franciszek Tusk of the European Council and an Exchange With Reporters
March 9, 2015

President Obama. Well, it is a great pleasure to welcome Donald Tusk to the White House in his new role. I had outstanding experiences working with him during the time that he was Prime Minister of Poland, one of our closest allies, and was consistently impressed with his outstanding work and his strong support for the transatlantic alliance. We are very pleased that he is carrying on those same skills and values to the European Council.

And let me just say at the outset that I think transatlantic unity is as strong as it's ever been. We face a number of significant challenges. Obviously, a major topic of conversation today will be the situation in Ukraine. We are all committed to making sure that we uphold the basic principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity that have been threatened by Russian aggression. We've been able to maintain strong unity with respect to sanctions.

We very much appreciate the work that's been done by Chancellor Angela Merkel and President François Hollande to establish a Minsk process. But we also know from experiences over the last year that unless we have strong monitoring and strong implementation, that these agreements will be meaningless.

And so part of what we'll be discussing is how do we make sure that we are able to monitor effectively what's happening on the ground in Ukraine and how do we continue to maintain pressure on Russia, on the separatists, to abide by these agreements?

We'll also have an opportunity to talk about the significant challenges that the Ukrainian economy faces. We have to make sure that the 90 percent of Ukraine that is still effectively governed by Kiev is able to succeed. And that requires that we work together, Europe and the United States, to supplement the work that's being done by the IMF.

We'll also be talking about a wide range of other issues. We share concerns about global growth and the global economy, and this will be an opportunity for us to highlight the opportunities of strengthening trade through the transatlantic trade agreement that is currently being discussed between the two parties. We'll have a chance to discuss the situation in Greece and what more can be done to bolster European growth, which obviously has been lagging over the course of the last 7, 8 years and ends up having an impact on the world economy and the U.S. economy.

We'll have an opportunity to talk about some of the security challenges that we face both—beyond Ukraine, including the situation in Libya, the situation in Iraq, the need for us to be unified in our fight against ISIL, but also to work effectively to prevent foreign fighters from getting to Syria, as well as foreign fighters leaving Syria and coming back to Europe and

the United States and potentially endangering our fellow citizens.

So we have a busy agenda. But I know that I've got a great partner and very much look forward to hearing Mr. Tusk's views on these very important issues.

So thank you.

President Tusk. Thank you, Mr. President. Good afternoon. First let me thank President Obama for inviting me in my new role as President of the European Council to Washington. We think—we much—we have too much to discuss. However, I would like to pay attention—special attention—to three topics: namely, the critical relations with Russia in the Ukrainian context; the threat of terrorism and actions of the so-called Islamic State in the context, of course—in the context of Libya; and lastly, our negotiations on T–TIP, I mean, the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership.

Although these are three different—very different—challenges, they have a common denominator, I think. It's a need, maybe greater than ever before, need for unity of Europe and the United States. We are witnessing today calling into question, and even attacking, of our fundamental values, like freedom, liberal democracy, prosperity, and for sure, geopolitical order.

And our enemies who use propaganda against us, commit acts of violence, and violate the sovereignty of our neighbors, they want to weaken the political community of the Western world. Today, we can see with full clarity that they are trying to divide us, inside of Europe, as well as Europe and America. But when we are united, we will be able to put a stop to the aggressive policy of Russia against her neighbors. And the past has shown that when we were united, we were able to successfully fight against terrorism. And also, thanks to the fact that we have acted together in the field, in the economy and free trade, we achieved success.

When it comes to T–TIP, getting agreement—it's my hope that we get an agreement. It's not so difficult—as difficult people think. We have very strong arguments. Of course, we need to balance the result of negotiations, for sure, and we have to convince our public opinion of—on both sides of the Atlantic. But we have strong arguments, and I believe that 2015, we—will be a crucial year in this process, because, in fact, T–TIP is not only about trade, but also about the chance of the jobs. And also, it's about geopolitical security and our transatlantic cooperation.

Second, we have to stop violent extremism spreading in Africa. We must help Libya because we cannot have a failed state run by warlords and fanatics sitting in anarchy just 100 miles off the southern coast of Europe.

And third, Ukraine, now, today, we are united on the need for full implement of the Minsk agreement and also on our determination to maintain the sanctions on Russia until the Minsk agreement is fully implemented.

It's a—brutal history is returned to us and to—brutal history and the politics of fait accompli. And this is why I think this is so important for Europe and for America that we have to not only speak in one voice, but also to act in unison, because who we are tomorrow depends on what we do today.

And I deeply believe that now is the best time to some kind of renaissance of faith in our community. And you Americans express this need, I think, in the most convincing phrase I know: "United we stand, divided we fall." This, I am convinced, it's true.

Thank you much.

President Obama. Thank you very much, everybody.

[*At this point, many reporters spoke at once.*]

Iran

Q. Mr. President, any reaction to the Republican letter to Iran?

President Obama. I'm sorry, what's that?

Q. The Republican letter to Iran?

President Obama. What about it?

Q. Could you comment on that?

President Obama. Well, I think it's somewhat ironic to see some Members of Congress wanting to make common cause with the hardliners in Iran. It's an unusual coalition. I think

what we're going to focus on right now is actually seeing whether we can get a deal or not. And once we do, then we'll—if we do, then we'll be able to make the case to the American people, and I'm confident we'll be able to implement it.

All right. Thank you very much everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:12 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany; and President François Hollande of France. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

Statement on the Wisconsin Legislature's Passage of Legislation To Prohibit Labor Unions From Collecting Mandatory Fees
March 9, 2015

It's no coincidence that the rise of the middle class in America coincided in large part with the rise of unions: workers who organized together for higher wages, better working conditions, and the benefits and protections that most workers take for granted today. So it's inexcusable that, over the past several years, just when middle class families and workers need that kind of security the most, there's been a sustained, coordinated assault on unions led by powerful interests and their allies in government.

So I'm deeply disappointed that a new anti-worker law in Wisconsin will weaken, rather than strengthen, workers in the new economy. Wisconsin is a State built by labor, with a proud proworker past. So even as its Governor claims victory over working Americans, I'd encourage him to try and score a victory for working Americans by taking meaningful action to raise their wages and offer them the security of paid leave. That's how you give hard-working middle class families a fair shot in the new economy, not by stripping their rights in the workplace, but by offering them all the tools they need to get ahead.

NOTE: The statement referred to Gov. Scott K. Walker of Wisconsin.

Remarks on Signing a Memorandum on a Student Aid Bill of Rights To Help Ensure Affordable Loan Repayment
March 10, 2015

Well, this is an opportunity to get a head start on what we're going to be talking about down in Atlanta, Georgia. One of the things that's been uppermost on my mind is, how do we make sure that every young person in this country who is willing to put in the effort can afford to go to college? And as part of that overall process, we're going to be talking today about a Student Bill of Rights.

This is part of it. It's an executive action that we're able to take to streamline and improve the manner in which the Federal Government interacts with students when it comes to student loans, and it will be part of a broader overview that I talk about while we're in Atlanta. All right?

[*At this point, the President signed the memorandum.*]

There you go. Thank you, everybody. Let's get on the plane. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:13 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. The memorandum is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks at the Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta, Georgia
March 10, 2015

The President. Hello, Atlanta! Hello, Yellow Jackets! This is a pretty good-looking crowd here!

Audience member. Thank you!

The President. He says thank you. [*Laughter*] I wasn't directing it specifically at you, but you do look pretty good. What do you think? [*Laughter*] I mean, I may not be the gauge. You should ask some of the ladies here. [*Laughter*]

Everybody, have a seat who has got a chair. If you don't have a chair, don't sit down. [*Laughter*] Now, I understand George P. Burdell was supposed to introduce me today. [*Laughter*] But nobody could find him.

So I want to thank Tiffany for stepping in. [*Laughter*] What she did not mention is that her letter to me was not just to express her concern about student loans. She said—in her letter, she said it was also to procrastinate from doing her thermodynamics homework. [*Laughter*] That's a true story. That is true. It's okay. [*Laughter*] I procrastinate sometimes. [*Laughter*] As long as you got it done, Tiffany. Where is Tiffany? Did you get it done?

Georgia Institute of Technology student Tiffany Davis. I got it done!

The President. Okay. [*Laughter*]

Let's give it up for Buzz and the Georgia Tech Band for getting us fired up. [*Applause*] Yay! Also give it up for Governor Nathan Deal, who is here; Congressmen Hank Johnson and David Scott; Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed; and the President of this great institution, Georgia Tech, Bud Peterson. [*Applause*] Hey! That's good. You've got a high approval rating. [*Laughter*] You do. Absolutely.

We also have a special guest with us. This is a proud Georgia Tech alum, who just happens also to be the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff: Admiral Sandy Winnefeld is here. Where's Sandy? There he is. Before he was the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, he was a Navy fighter pilot, which is cooler. Now he just goes to meetings. [*Laughter*] What's up with that? I told him he's got to get back on a plane.

The—it is great to be at one of the finest technical institutes in the world. One of the finest in the world. I mean, you've got to be if the Ramblin' Wreck is still running after all these years. Is that it? [*Laughter*] That's a Georgia Tech reference that some of you may not know. [*Laughter*] I also know that Georgia Tech is terrific because we've actually worked with you on several fronts, from promoting advanced manufacturing to unlocking the mysteries of the brain, to helping more students become entrepreneurs.

And the reason I wanted to come here today is because I believe that higher education, as you believe, is one of the best investments that anybody can make in their future. And it's also one of the best investments you can make in our country's future. So I'm here to say thank you and to tell you I'm proud of you, because I know that it's not always easy to do what you're doing. It takes perseverance. A lot of late nights in the library and the lab, and you're wrapping your minds around complex formulas and concepts that, frankly, I don't understand. [*Laughter*] But I know they're complex. [*Laughter*] And some of you are holding jobs down at the same time, which makes it even harder.

But as frustrating as it may be, and Tiffany expressed some frustrations on occasion, it is worth it. Higher education has never been more important. And the message I want to deliver today, not just to you, but to the entire country, is the entire Nation has to treat it as a priority.

Right now our economy is growing steadily. It's creating new jobs. You're going to be going into a job market that's much better than the one that existed when I came into office 6 years ago. After the worst economic crisis of our lifetimes, over the past 5 years, our businesses have now created 12 million new jobs. Unemployment continues to come down, and obviously, that's good news for those of you who are graduating soon. But—yes, that's right, you want a job. [*Laughter*] Okay. Your

parents also want you to have a job. They don't want you on the couch. [*Laughter*]

But I didn't run for President just to get us back to where we were. I ran for President to get us to where we need to go. And where we need to go is a growing middle class with rising incomes and opportunities for everybody who's willing to work hard. An America where no matter who you are, what you look like, where you came from, how you started, who you love, what faith you're a part of, you can make it in this country if you try. That's what America is all about.

And today, a college degree is the surest ticket to the middle class and beyond. It's the key to getting a good job that pays a good income. And it offers a measure of security, because a college degree tells employers that you don't just have one set of skills, that you've got the continuous capacity to learn new skills, which is going to be particularly important for your generation because the economy is going to churn and change in ways that none of us can even anticipate.

Before we came out here, I was talking to a group, including Sandy Winnefeld and your mayor, Kasim Reed, and Tyler Perry, a buddy who's—[*laughter*]—he wasn't in "Madea," he was Tyler. [*Laughter*] And we were talking about how rapidly the technology is transforming everything we understand, everything we know: everything from drones to artificial intelligence to driverless cars. And we don't yet know how all that is going to shape the Nation that you inherit, but we know it's going to shape it dramatically. And in order for you to be able to be successful, you're going to have to adapt continuously. The days where you work at one place for 30, 40 years, those days are over.

And so the skill sets you are getting now are going to keep you in that job market. You're going to have multiple jobs before you're 30. Some of you will have multiple careers. And we live in a 21st-century economy, where your most valuable asset is your imagination, your knowledge, your ability to analyze tough problems. And that's not just true for individual Americans, it's true for our whole country.

The ability to compete in the global economy depends on us having the world's most skilled, best educated workforce. And by the way, let me just add, it's also going to be critical for us to maintain our democracy in a complex, diverse society. Because—[*applause*].

Sometimes, understandably, when I come to college campuses, there's a lot of just bread and butter, nuts and bolts, how does this translate into jobs, careers. But part of what has made America the exceptional nation that it is, is our diversity and our ability to draw from every corner of the world—all the talent, all the ideas—and create this amazing stew. And the more complex the society, the tougher that becomes.

And so to have all of you possess the ability to listen and to learn from people who aren't like you, that's also what you're learning here, and that's going to make you more effective to every employer out there. So—[*applause*]. But it's also—it's going to make you better citizens, and it's going to make our democracy function better.

But back to the jobs thing. [*Laughter*] Jobs and businesses will go wherever the best workers are. And I don't want them to have to look any further than the United States of America. I want businesses investing here. I want Americans getting those new jobs. That's how we're going to lead the world in this century just like we did in the 20th century.

So here's the challenge: Higher education has never been more important, but it's also never been more expensive. The average undergrad who borrows money to pay for college graduates with about $28,000 in student loan debt. That's just the average; some students end up with a lot more than that—you know who you are. [*Laughter*] I'm not telling you anything you don't know.

And let me say that it's been established time and time again that Georgia Tech is one of the best bargains around. You are getting a great education for a great value, so—[*applause*]. Which is one of the reasons I'm here; obviously, I wouldn't go to a place that was a bad bargain and really expensive and gave no value. That would not make sense. [*Laughter*]

But even here at Georgia Tech, even with the great value it is, it's expensive. And I'm here to tell you, I'm with you. I believe that America is not a place where higher education is a privilege that is reserved for the few. America needs to be a place where higher education has to be available for every single person who's willing to strive for it, who's willing to work for it.

And I've said this before: I take this personally. And my grandfather had a chance to go to college because this country decided that when veterans returned home from World War II, they should be able to go to college. And this Government stepped up.

My mother was able to raise two kids by herself, in part because she got grants that helped pay for her education. And I am only standing here, and Michelle is only where she is today, because of scholarships and student loans and work-study. We did not come from families of means. I mean, we didn't come from families of means, but we knew that if we worked hard, there were—there was help out there to make sure we got a great education. That's what this country gave to us.

And that's why this has been such a priority for me. I take it personally because when I look out at all of you, I see myself. And I remember the fact that it took me 10 years to pay off all our student loans. We were paying more for our student loans than our mortgage, even after Malia and Sasha were born. We were supposed to be saving for their college education; we were still paying off ours.

And that's why we've acted again and again to make college more affordable. Five years ago this month, we enacted the largest reforms to the student loan program in history. We cut out the big banks that were taking taxpayer dollars and serving as middlemen in the student loan game, and we said, well, let's just give the money directly to the students like you.

So we saved—as a result of that change, we saved billions of dollars. We were able to expand tax credits and Pell grants and put college within reach for millions more middle class and low-income students across the country. Then, we fought to keep interest rates on student rates—interest rates on student loans low and capped how high those rates can rise. And as a result, the typical undergrad is saving about a hundred—$1,500. We also acted to let millions of graduates cap their loan payments at 10 percent of their incomes so they don't have to choose between paying the rent and paying back their debt.

And by the way, everybody here, if you don't already know about the income-based repayment program, you need to learn about it, because it's still underutilized. But it gives you an opportunity to make sure that if you make a career choice that doesn't make tons of money, you're still able to do the responsible thing and pay back your loans at a pace that also allows you to build a family and buy a home and to live your lives.

And graduates who go into lower paying fields like social work or teaching, they're not going to pay a price for following their dreams because they're going to have even better options in terms of how they repay their loans. So that's what we did on the student loan side.

Meanwhile, we're working to hold down the cost of a college education. So we're partnering with schools like Georgia Tech on innovative ways to increase value, like your online master's program in computer science, which costs just a fraction of the price of an in-classroom program.

And I sent Congress a bold new plan to bring down the cost of community college to zero. Because not everybody may be prepared right away to start a 4-year university. But also, in some cases, even if they could, they may choose to get 2 years of college free and then be able to transfer the credits for their 4-year education. We want to make community college, at minimum, just as free and universal as high school is today. That should be our new baseline. We want to get out ahead of the curve in terms of where we need to go.

Earlier today I took a new action to make it easier for students to pay for college and pay off their loans. We're creating a way for you to ask questions about your loans, file a complaint, cut through the bureaucracy, get a

faster response. That's not just from the Government, that's also from the contractors who sometimes service your loans. We're going to require that the businesses that service your loans provide clear information about how much you owe, what your options are for repaying it, and if you're falling behind, help you get back in good standing with reasonable fees on a reasonable timeline. And if you're paying stuff off, you should be paying off the high-interest loans first, not the low-interest ones. We're going to take a hard look at whether we need new laws to strengthen protections for all borrowers, wherever you get your loans from.

So we're trying to tackle this problem from every angle. There's no silver bullet. But we're trying to make sure that across the board, more and more young people can afford to go to college and then, afterwards, aren't so burdened with debt that you can't do anything else. We want to make this experience more affordable because you're not just investing in yourselves, you're investing in your Nation.

But here's the thing: We've got more to do, all of us—universities, students, parents, financial institutions, and yes, the Government—to make sure that you're not saddled with debt before you even get started in life. That's something that's in all of our interests.

Now, my friends, the Republicans in Congress, are planning to unveil their budget soon. I'm hoping they have something to offer that will help hard-working young people. So far, the education bill that they've put forward a couple weeks ago is not a good template; it's not a good start. I'm hoping it will improve because right now, the way it's structured, it would let States and cities shuffle education dollars into things like sports stadiums or tax cuts for the wealthy instead of schools. And it would allow States to make even deeper cuts into school districts that need the most support, send even more money to the most well-off school districts. We'd invest less per child by the end of the decade than we do now. So it's the wrong approach. We've got to be working to make sure every child gets a quality education, college every student can afford.

And so we're going to be reaching out to them, trying to get them to see, this is a good investment in our economy, it's a good investment in our national security. The way that you keep America safe, one of the best, most important ways is to make sure we've got a strong economy with a strong workforce. And all of us have a role to play in making that happen.

So in order to spur more of a conversation to get more folks engaged, we're going to try something new to help do this. It's not a fancy new program. It's not—it doesn't have a complicated acronym. It doesn't involve new spending or bureaucracy. It's just a simple organizing principle that I want all of us to sign onto, a declaration of values, what I'm calling a Student Aid Bills of Rights—a Student Aid Bill of Rights.

And it says every student deserves access to a quality, affordable education. Every student should be able to access the resources to pay for college. Every borrower has the right to an affordable repayment plan. Every borrower has the right to quality customer service, reliable information, and fair treatment, even if they struggle to repay their loans.

It's a simple set of principles that if everybody signed onto—Republicans, Democrats, State legislators, university presidents, Members of Congress—it can focus our attention, all these different things that we're doing, into one simple, basic idea, which is, make sure that when you're doing the right thing, that your society has got your back and is looking out for you.

So based on this principle, we're going to make sure universities are using technology to help students learn at lower costs. We're going to make sure that loan servicers can find better ways to help borrowers keep up with monthly payments that they can afford. We as a country can do more to invest in Pell grants and community college to make sure quality education is affordable for everybody.

So we're going to just keep on moving on every front. And we want everybody who agrees with these principles to sit down and work with us and figure out how they can make these stu-

dent rights real. And you've got a part to play as well.

You know, I—we had the great honor of being at Selma this past weekend for the 50th anniversary of the March from Selma. And one of the main points, I think, that all of us made was, change doesn't happen by itself; it happens because people get organized and mobilized and focused, and they push, and sometimes, they disrupt, and they make folks uncomfortable, and they ask questions about why is it this way instead of that way.

And I want us to think about access to higher education and affordability of higher education in that same way. I want us to all organize together, not on a partisan basis—it's not organizing around an election—it's organizing around a simple idea that everybody should be able to get behind.

And you're going to have to play the part. Because what we also made the point of this past weekend is, young people typically lead the pack: with new ideas, with new initiatives, with new focus, with a new vision.

So, if you agree with the basic values that I outlined, if you believe in a Student Aid Bill of Rights that will help more Americans pay for a quality education, then sign your name to this declaration.

You can go to a website, because you guys like tech stuff. [*Laughter*] You go to: whitehouse.gov/collegeopportunity. Whitehouse.gov/collegeopportunity. Tell your families and classmates and professors to do it. I'm going to ask Members of Congress and lenders and as many business leaders as I can find to sign up.

We're going to mobilize a coalition around this country to get this process moving, because there are a lot of good ideas right now, but they're stalled, or they're happening piecemeal, or they're happening in one university, or they're happening in one State, and they have to happen everywhere. And we've got to mobilize the entire Nation to make that happen. And it's going to start with students themselves, because if you aren't asking for something different, if you aren't asking for help, if you're not getting mobilized, then folks aren't going to help you, and then, you'll just be complaining, especially once you graduate and you start having to write those checks. [*Laughter*]

So don't stop engaging in this issue, even after you graduate, because you'll be still impacted by it. And in the meantime, you've got to study hard and work hard and have fun. Make some new discoveries. Inspire us. Lead us. Be the Americans that we need you to be.

Every American should have the right to go as far as their talents and hard work will take them. That is what college is all about. That is what America is all about. And you embody that basic notion. You are that talent. You are an embodiment of what we hope for: A country that says that everybody, rich, poor, Black, White, Hispanic, Asian, gay, straight, man, woman, with disabilities, without—no matter who you are or where you come from, not only can you succeed but you can help everybody else succeed. That's the promise that helped us become the greatest nation in the world. That's the promise that I need you working for.

Thank you, everybody. God bless you. Thank you, Georgia.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:51 p.m. in McCamish Pavilion. In his remarks, he referred to actor and comedian Tyler Perry. He also referred to his sister Maya Soetoro-Ng; and the memorandum on a Student Aid Bill of Rights to help ensure affordable loan repayment, which was signed on March 10 and is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting an Extension of the United States-Russia Mutual Fisheries Agreement
March 10, 2015

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

In accordance with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*), I transmit herewith an Agreement between the Government of the United States and the Government of the Russian Federation Extending the Agreement Between the Government of the United States and the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on Mutual Fisheries Relations of May 31, 1988, with annex, as extended (the "Mutual Fisheries Agreement"). The present Agreement, which was effected by an exchange of notes in Moscow on July 31, 2013, and December 10, 2013, extends the Mutual Fisheries Agreement until December 31, 2018.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to John A. Boehner, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Iran
March 11, 2015

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency with respect to Iran that was declared on March 15, 1995, is to continue in effect beyond March 15, 2015.

The crisis between the United States and Iran resulting from certain actions and policies of the Government of Iran has not been resolved. The Joint Plan of Action (JPOA) between the P5+1 (the United States, United Kingdom, Germany, France, Russia and China) and Iran went into effect on January 20, 2014, and was renewed by mutual consent of the P5+1 and Iran on July 19, 2014, and November 24, 2014, extending the temporary sanctions relief provided under the JPOA through June 30, 2015. This marks the first time in a decade that Iran has agreed to take, and has taken specific actions that stop the advance and roll back key elements of its nuclear program. In return for Iran's actions on its nuclear program, the P5+1, in coordination with the European Union, are taking actions to implement the limited, temporary, and reversible sanctions relief outlined in the JPOA.

Nevertheless, certain actions and policies of the Government of Iran are contrary to the interests of the United States in the region and continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States. For these reasons, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared with respect to Iran and to maintain in force comprehensive sanctions against Iran to deal with this threat.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume. An original was not available for verification of the content of this letter.

Statement on the Death of Willie T. Barrow
March 12, 2015

Reverend Willie T. Barrow was a civil rights icon and a Chicago institution, a "Little Warrior" in pursuit of justice for all God's children. In 1936, when she was just 12 years old, Reverend Barrow demanded to be let on to her all-White schoolbus in Texas, and the fight for equality she joined that day would become the cause of her life. She marched with Dr. King on Washington and in Selma. She stood up for labor rights and women's rights. She made one of the first pieces of the AIDS Memorial Quilt and proudly welcomed LGBT brothers and sisters to the movement she helped lead.

Nowhere was Reverend Barrow's impact felt more than in our hometown of Chicago. Through Operation Breadbasket, the Rainbow PUSH Coalition, and her beloved Vernon Park Church, she never stopped doing all she could to make her community a better place. To Michelle and me, she was a constant inspiration, a lifelong mentor, and a very dear friend. I was proud to count myself among the more than 100 men and women she called her "Godchildren" and worked hard to live up to her example. I still do.

Michelle and I are deeply saddened by Reverend Barrow's passing, but we take comfort in the knowledge that our world is a far better place because she was a part of it. Our thoughts and prayers are with Reverend Barrow's family and with all those who loved her as we did.

Remarks Following a Roundtable Discussion on Veterans Health Care at the Carl T. Hayden Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Phoenix, Arizona
March 13, 2015

Well, I want to thank everybody who is here for what's been an excellent conversation, not just about this particular facility or this particular State, but how do we make sure that the VA is working for every single veteran who's put on a uniform and has made enormous sacrifices on behalf of our country's security and freedom.

We all know that there have been significant problems at this facility, that the kind of cooking the books and unwillingness to face up to the fact that veterans were not being adequately served went on too long, and as a consequence, we didn't fix what needed to be fixed.

What I'm glad about is since Bob McDonald, working with Deputy Secretary Sloan Gibson—have been able to do is to start making some progress and chipping away at the problems here. And we've brought in a new team that has been tackling these issues to make sure that wait times for scheduling, access to providers is greatly improved.

But what we know is that there is still more work to do. And this discussion allowed us to hone in on some problems that continue to crop up, and as a consequence, will allow us to fix them.

I want to thank the Members of Congress who are here. All of them have expressed great interest in how the Choice Act is being implemented. This legislation that Congress moved forward provided a lot of resources for us to be able to hire more clinicians and to beef up the services that are provided in many of the existing VA centers. But what it also did was, for folks who have difficulty getting to a VA facility, it gave them the possibility of getting a private sector provider for their care.

There have been some concerns expressed about whether that information is getting out to veterans as effectively as it should. There are

some specific issues of implementation that Senator McCain, Senator Flake, and Congresswoman Sinema and all the Members of Congress here described. What I've committed to is making sure that we implement the Choice Act promptly and effectively and that some of the concerns that have been raised are addressed. And I know that Bob is committed to that same thing.

Some of the other issues that were expressed of concern revolved around mental health issues and suicide prevention. And this is an area that there's been great bipartisan work on, but there's still more to do. And I think there were some very positive suggestions that were received about how we can make progress there.

And the final issue that I heard a lot about today is the need to restore trust and confidence in the VA system. Trust is one of those things that you can lose real quick and then it takes some time to build. The good news is, is that there are outstanding folks here at this VA and all the VAs across the country who are deserving of trust. But it's important that veterans know that somebody has got their backs and that if there are problems that we're not being defensive about them, we're not hiding them. We're working together with the outstanding USOs and other organizations around the table to fix them.

I think that process has begun, but we've got more work to do to make sure that there is a culture of customer service and there's enthusiasm and excitement and a sense of purpose and mission about serving our veterans. Because that's the kind of attitude that they brought to bear when they were out in theaters of war and serving our country, and that's what they deserve every single day up and down the chain.

So I'm very grateful to everybody for the input that they've provided. Last point I would make: Although we spent a lot of time talking about areas that needed improvement, although we are very pleased that we've got a outstanding former CEO from the private sector as well as a veteran in Joe Robles, who's going to be heading up our Advisory Committee to address some of these issues and work with Bob and Sloan around what we're calling MyVA, although we know that more problems will crop up because that's inevitable in an organization this large, every veteran who I talked to here today emphasized that when it came to the actual care that people were receiving once in the system, it was outstanding; that there were great doctors, great nurses, great staff who care deeply about our veterans. And obviously, a lot of those doctors, nurses, and staff are veterans themselves and understand the sacrifices that our veterans have made.

So there are systems that have to be fixed; there's management that has to continue to drive a renewed sense of purpose inside the VA. But we can't ignore that every single day, the VA is doing some outstanding work to provide care to our veterans. And that's not, I think, spin; that's something that we heard directly from a lot of veterans around this table.

And we want to thank everybody at the VA who's been doing their job and doing it well, because just the fact that there have been a few bad apples, some mistakes that have been made, systems that aren't designed to get the job done, I don't want that to detract from the outstanding work of a lot of people inside this organization.

So thank you very much, everybody, for what was a terrific conversation and your outstanding input. And I want to especially thank the Members of Congress who are here who, in a bipartisan fashion, have been constructive, stayed on the case, and have allocated resources to make sure that this problem gets fixed.

Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:16 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Josue "Joe" Robles, Jr., Chairman, MyVA Advisory Committee.

Remarks at the Home of Sergeant First Class Cory Remsburg, USA, in Gilbert, Arizona

March 13, 2015

Well, I just thought I'd stop by. I was in the neighborhood, and I hear there was a barbecue going on. [*Laughter*] I figured—I didn't bring my swim shorts, though. That's the only problem. I look at this pool and I—I'm thinking I wouldn't mind taking a dip. [*Laughter*]

I think a lot of folks know how I first met Cory and the relationship we've developed. There aren't that many people that I've met during the course of my Presidency or my life that have inspired me more. Cory already inspired me as a Ranger when he was fighting to keep this country safe. In some ways, I was even more inspired when he had to fight back against some devastating injuries that he received defending our freedom and our liberty, along with his fellow Rangers.

And to watch, day in, day out, the kind of effort and the kind of positive attitude, the kind of "never give up, never give in" heart that this guy had—that's the kind of thing that keeps me going every single day.

The greatest honor of my life is serving as Commander in Chief to the greatest military the world's ever known. To know that that spirit continues even after somebody has come back from war theater, and maybe is drawn on even more, that just makes me want to work that much harder.

To Craig and Annie and the whole family, the way they have helped to make sure that all that effort Cory has put in has resulted now in him not just walking and talking, but working and helping his fellow veterans with the care that they need is just remarkable. But then, to also see how the community has rallied to help him couldn't make me prouder to be an American.

And I just want to, in addition to Craig and Annie—and I should have mentioned Leo—[*laughter*]—the folks who helped make this incredible home possible, the Army Ranger Lead the Way Fund, and we are so grateful to you for that outstanding work. Jared Allen couldn't be here, but I know that the Homes for Wounded Warriors and everything that he's been doing; for the whole community of Gilbert and the folks who rallied around to make this possible; to the craftsmen—I mean, I was looking at some of the details inside this home—and people volunteering their time and their effort to make this an incredible place where Cory is going to be able to work out and, I suspect, watch quite a few sports programs—[*laughter*]—have the occasional libation—[*laughter*]—it speaks to who we are as a country and who we are as a people.

So I just want to say thank you to all of you. I'm obviously most proud of Cory. But in the same way that he served and protected us, it's good to know that we want to give back and make sure we're there for him too when it's needed. And I think this is a story that I hope everybody, not just in Arizona, but all across the country, remembers.

And that we know that there are a whole bunch of Corys out there. Not all the wounds are as easily seen. And we've got to be just as vigilant and just as generous and just as focused in making sure that every single one of our men and women in uniform, that they're getting what they've earned and what they deserve.

So, Cory, God bless you, man. Rangers lead the way.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:40 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Craig and Annie Remsburg, parents of Sfc. Remsburg; and Jared S. Allen, founder, Jared Allen's Homes for Wounded Warriors.

The President's Weekly Address
March 14, 2015

Hi, everybody. Earlier this week, I visited with students at Georgia Tech to talk about the importance of higher education in the new economy and how we can make it more affordable.

In an economy increasingly built on innovation, the most important skill you can sell is your knowledge. That's why higher education is, more than ever, the surest ticket to the middle class. But just when it's never been more important, it's also never been more expensive. The average undergrad who borrows to pay for college ends up graduating with about $28,000 in student loan debt.

That's why my administration has worked hard to make college more affordable. We expanded tax credits and Pell grants, enacted the largest reform to student loan programs in history, and fought to keep interest rates on student loans low. We've acted to let millions of graduates cap loan payments at 10 percent of their income so they don't have to choose between paying the rent and paying back their debt. I've sent Congress my plan to bring the cost of community college down to zero, because 2 years of higher education should be as free and universal as high school is today.

But all of us—elected officials, universities, business leaders—everybody needs to do more to bring down college costs. Which is why this week, I unveiled another way that we can help more Americans afford college. It doesn't involve any new spending or bureaucracy. It's a simple declaration of values, what I call a Student Aid Bill of Rights. It says that every student deserves access to a quality, affordable education; every student should be able to access the resources to pay for college; every borrower has the right to an affordable repayment plan; and every borrower has the right to quality customer service, reliable information, and fair treatment, even if they struggle to repay their loans.

That's it, just a few simple principles. But if we all rally around these principles, there's a lot that colleges, lenders, and the people you sent to Washington and to your State legislatures can do to realize them across the country.

So if you believe in a Student Aid Bill of Rights that will help more Americans pay for a quality education, I'm asking you to visit whitehouse.gov/collegeopportunity. Sign your name to this declaration. Tell your families and your friends and fellow students. I'm going to ask Members of Congress and lenders and as many business leaders as I can find. Because making sure that students aren't saddled with debt before they even get started in life is in all our interests.

In America, a higher education cannot be a privilege reserved for only the few. It has to be available to everybody who's willing to work for it.

Thanks, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 1:20 p.m. on March 12 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast on March 14. In the address, the President referred to the memorandum on a Student Aid Bill of Rights to help ensure affordable loan repayment, which was signed on March 10 and is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 13, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on March 14.

Remarks Following a Meeting With the Council of the Great City Schools
March 16, 2015

Okay, well, I want to thank the Council of the Great City Schools. This is an organization that represents superintendents and board members and educators from some of the largest school districts in the country. And we just had a terrific conversation about some of the

extraordinary progress that's being made at the local levels.

The good news is that we are seeing, as a consequence of some of the reforms that we've initiated and partnered with at the State and local levels—we're seeing improved reading scores, improved math scores, improved graduation rates. We're seeing improvement in some of the previously lowest performing schools.

And this organization, I think, has taken on the challenge and has been able to begin a process of turning school districts around and making sure that young people are getting the kind of education that they need to be able to compete in the 21st century. That's the good news.

The challenge that we face is that this is a monumental task, and it requires resources. And I'm very proud of what we've been able to do in terms of helping schools to initiate improvements in how they train teachers, in how they engage kids in the classroom, in how they start moving education around math and science and technology, how they reach populations that are particularly difficult to reach, how they're bringing new technology into the classroom. But all that is dependent on a budget and an approach at the Federal level that says we care about all kids and not just some.

Now, the Republican House and Senate are about to put forward their budget. My hope is that their budget reflects the priorities of educating every child. But I can tell you that if the budget maintains sequester-level funding, then we would actually be spending less on pre-K to 12th grade in America's schools in terms of Federal support than we were back in 2000. And that's adjusting for inflation. The notion that we would be going backwards instead of forwards in how we're devoting resources to educating our kids makes absolutely no sense.

In addition, we've got a major debate obviously taking place about the reauthorization of the major education act that shapes Federal policy towards our schools. There is, I think, some useful conversations taking place between the chairman of the relevant committee, Lamar Alexander, and Patty Murray. But there's some core principles that all the leaders here believe in. Making sure that we continue to provide resources to the poorest school districts and not creating a situation where we can suddenly shift dollars from wealthy districts—or from poorer districts to wealthy districts, or alternatively, that education aid suddenly can start going to sport stadiums or tax cuts at the State level. That's something that these school districts feel very strongly about.

Making sure that we continue to focus on low-performing schools and that they are getting additional resources. Making sure that we are continuing to assess in a smart way, on an annual basis, how young people are performing, and that we're disaggregating so that we can see in various subgroups how young people are performing to make sure they're on track. That's something that people here care very much about.

Making sure that we've got high standards and high expectations for all our kids, and making sure that we are providing the resources to teachers and principals to meet those high standards. That's going to be important.

Making sure that we are investing in special education and English learning for large portions of our student population that may need extra help. That's going to be critically important.

So there are a set of principles that are reflected in my budget and I hope will be reflected in the Republican budget. But if it is not, then we're going to have to have a major debate. We are making too much progress now in terms of graduation rates, improved reading scores, improved math scores, increasing standards, increasing access to the resources the kids need for us to be going backwards now. And this is something worth fighting for.

So I am very grateful for all the folks here for the work they're doing. I hope that people will get familiar with some of the stories of progress that have been made. If you look at what's happened in the DC public schools, or you look at the efforts that are being made in places like Fresno, which—it's a poor city in a poor school district, but despite that is seeing real strides. You look at what's going on in

Cleveland, where I'll be visiting tomorrow [Wednesday].* These are school districts that, despite enormous challenges, have made real progress.

And the idea that we'd go backwards on that progress, in some cases for ideological reasons, as opposed to because of what the evidence says, that's something that—that's not the kind of legacy we want to leave for the next generation. And I'm going to continue to fight to make sure that this progress continues.

So I want to thank everybody who's around this table and know that they're going to have a strong partner in my administration.

All right? Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:51 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Prime Minister Enda Kenny of Ireland
March 17, 2015

President Obama. Well, it is a great pleasure to once again welcome my good friend and colleague, the Taoiseach, Prime Minister Kenny, back to the White House and the Oval Office along with his outstanding delegation.

This is an annual affair and always one of my favorites. It allows me to trot out my Irish heritage—[*laughter*]—and brings back incredibly fond memories of my visits to Ireland, and it allows us to reaffirm the incredible friendship and family ties between our two countries. The Taoiseach visits at a time when Ireland is on the move after a very challenging financial crisis and economic recession. Under the Taoiseach's leadership, finances have stabilized, the economy is now growing again, unemployment's beginning to come down, and there are terrific opportunities for us to further collaborate in creating jobs both in the United States and in Ireland.

One of those areas is the potential for a Transatlantic Trade Partnership between the United States and the European Union. And we had discussions about how we can continue the negotiations on those fronts. And I was able to hear from the Taoiseach about Europe's progress in trying to strengthen its economy as a whole, because obviously, what happens in Europe, as one of our largest trading partners, has a great impact on what happens here in the United States as well.

We had the opportunity to talk about Northern Ireland, and although the recent framework agreement that has been put in place offers great hope for a resolution of some longstanding challenges there, there is still more work to do. But we very much appreciate the leadership that the Taoiseach has shown in this process and the collaboration with the United States in encouraging both parties to arrive at peaceful resolutions that can lead to more prosperity and growth in Northern Ireland.

We had an opportunity to talk about some of the domestic issues here. Of great interest to the Taoiseach is immigration reform. I indicated to him the executive actions that I've taken, some of which are currently tied up in the courts. And we share the view that one of the great strengths of the United States has always been its willingness to welcome new immigrants to our shores. That's what's made us unique and special. And nobody has contributed more to the growth and dynamism of the U.S. economy than our Irish immigrants, and that continues to be the case. So we appreciate the interest there.

And we had a chance to discuss some of the broader security issues that we face in common: the importance of having a firm and resolute position with respect to Ukraine and Russian aggression there, and the need to maintain strong sanctions and ensure that the Minsk agreement is fully implemented and that the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine is respected. We had a chance to discuss the challenges in the Middle East and the impor-

* White House correction.

tance of stemming the flow of foreign fighters, both to Ireland and to the United States and the rest of Europe, and increasing the deepening cooperation in counterterrorism and countering foreign fighter flows. And we very much appreciate the cooperation that's been provided there.

So as usual, the biggest challenge that I have when I meet with the Taoiseach is finding something we disagree on. It's very hard because we're great partners and he is a great friend. We look forward to welcoming everybody to the White House for some St. Patrick's Day cheer later this evening, and we're going to be going over to Congress for some friendship and fellowship on a bipartisan basis.

I should mention that I was hoping for a little luck of the Irish as the Republicans put forward their budget today. Unfortunately, what we're seeing right now is a failure to invest in education and infrastructure and research and national defense, all the things that we need to grow, to create jobs, to stay at the forefront of innovation, and to keep our country safe. It's not a budget that reflects the future. It's not a budget that reflects growth. It's not a budget that is going to help ensure that middle class families are able to maintain security and stability and that people who are trying to get into the middle class will have the rungs on the ladder to get into the middle class.

So I'm going to be talking more about this tomorrow. We're going to have a robust debate. And my hope is, is that ultimately we can find some compromises where together we are financing the education, the research, the training, the building of roads and bridges and ports and railways and all the things that we need to grow and put people back to work and make sure that the incredible momentum that our economy has built over the last several years continues well into the future and for next—future generations.

So we'll—I'll keep my four-leaf clover in my pocket and see if the Speaker and Mitch McConnell and others are interested in having that conversation.

All right? Taoiseach.

Prime Minister Kenny. Thanks very much. Well, first of all, it's a privilege to be back again here in the environs of the Oval Office. I've wished the President a Happy St. Patrick's Day and his First Lady a safe journey on her travels to the Far East.

I've thanked the President for the appointment of Ambassador Kevin O'Malley to our country. He's doing an outstanding job, and we welcome him wholeheartedly.

The President has outlined the issues that we discussed here. I've given him a rundown on the progress that Ireland has made in the last number of years in terms of our growth, employment increasing, unemployment dropping. The progress in respect of our economy—our deficit to be eliminated by 2018 and so on. But I reminded him that it's a fragile progress and it's a work that's not yet complete. So our challenge is to manage that carefully for the future, which is what we intend to do.

I've given the President an update in respect of Europe with the situation insofar as the election in Britain is concerned, the issues that might arise there; the potential for a referenda—referendum in respect of staying in or staying out of Europe, and the need for Britain to stay in, and our big support for that and for the comments of Prime Minister Cameron.

I've referred to the situation in Greece, where the Prime Minister was clear that he wanted time and space to produce sustainable programs for the future and did not want to default or leave the euro, and he's been granted that by the European Council. The time is obviously shortening, and the ball is very much in the court of the Greek politicians.

We've referred to the T–TIP transatlantic agreement. We're very big supporters of this, and I commended the President on his forthrightness in making the decision to have the American side of that team engage with the European teams. And we want that to happen, and we want it to happen in the lifetime of this administration. And therefore, the next 6 months are critical for that. I will speak to President Juncker and President Tusk on Thursday in Brussels about this. The President is very strong on moving this along.

We referred obviously to immigration and the issue that affects us here. I commended President Obama on his executive action. Obviously, I'm aware that this is going through the courts. And the question of visa waivers and E–3 visas and all of that are part of the process. So I would hope that at the end of the day, that political leadership here in Washington and the greatest nation, the most powerful nation on Earth can actually deal with this particular problem. And it can only be dealt with by having courage and leadership to actually make it happen.

I referred to one of the recipients of the scientific medal, which I awarded yesterday, to France Córdova, herself the descendant of immigrants to America from Ireland, who became head of NASA and one of the best known astrophysicists in the world. And that kind of contribution is part of what immigration has brought for the U.S.

So we hope that that can move through the system and that the work of the—decisiveness of President Obama on this can bear fruit, and particularly the element of that—[*inaudible*]—on the road to legitimacy is the opportunity to travel over and back to see loved ones, as the case might be. That's an essential part of this. President Obama tried to deal with this by executive action. Obviously, there's a court process in place now.

We discussed the issue of the talks in respect of nonproliferation and the ISIS situation and the Middle East in general, and the challenges that face many countries and indeed humanity in that part of the world at the moment.

We also discussed the Ukraine, the necessity to have clarity about strength in respect of sanctions. And I've reminded the President that Europe has been very clear on this and wants to be very clear in coordinating activity with the United States in respect of sanctions being imposed on Russia.

So all in all, it's been a very constructive, I think a very inclusive conversation. I'm very privileged to be here on behalf of the Irish people and to say that it is quite unique for a country as small as Ireland to have this reach right to the center of influence here in the White House. And I thank you, President Obama, and your good wife and family and your administration for allowing our country to have this access. And I wish you the very best for the future.

President Obama. Well, thank you. And I just want to point out, Taoiseach got me a book of poetry by Yeats, one of my favorite poets. So in addition to all its wonderful exports, at the top of the list has to be poetry from the Irish.

Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:30 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, Prime Minister Kenny referred to Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras of Greece; President Jean-Claude Juncker of the European Commission; President Donald Franciszek Tusk of the European Council; and France A. Córdova, Director, National Science Foundation, in her former capacity as Chief Scientist at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

Remarks With Prime Minister Enda Kenny of Ireland at a St. Patrick's Day Reception
March 17, 2015

President Obama. Hello, everybody! This is a good-looking crowd. Everybody all right back there? Have you been enjoying yourselves too much? [*Laughter*] Happy St. Patrick's Day, everybody. There are too many distinguished Irish and Irish Americans here tonight to mention, so I'll just offer "a hundred thousand welcomes" to the White House. But I want to offer a warm welcome to our special guests: Taoiseach Kenny and his lovely wife Fionnuala. Give them a big round of applause. Ireland's Ambassador to the United States, Anne Anderson; and her counterpart, our man in Dublin, Kevin O'Malley.

I also want to take a moment to recognize those who do the hard work of waging peace. Theresa Villiers, the U.K.'s Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, is here. Please give Theresa a big round of applause. As is America's Consul General in Belfast, Greg Burton—yay, Greg—and Richard Haass, two men who helped bring the Stormont House Agreement to fruition, and we are very grateful to them. Two people who were going to be here—First Minister Peter Robinson and Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness—are home hammering out the details to implement the agreement. So we wish them good luck and Godspeed so the people of Northern Ireland can finally enjoy the full fruits of a lasting peace. Now——

Audience members. Hear, hear.

President Obama. Hear, hear.

There's always a brood of Irish American Members of Congress running around here. [*Laughter*] Or folks who wish they were Irish. [*Laughter*] But let me just mention one. When Brendan Boyle ran for Congress last year, his campaign was followed closely by folks back in Ireland, not so much because of him, although he's an impressive young man, but because of his dad. Frank Boyle grew up in Donegal. He moved to America as a young man, married an Irish lass, had two sons. He supported his family by working as a janitor for the Philadelphia public transit authority. Today, one son, Kevin, serves in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives. Brendan serves in the U.S. Congress. The Boyle boys are all here today. They've made people across two nations very proud. Give them a big round of applause. [*Applause*] Hey!

So when Irish and Americans get together, there's more than a diplomatic exchange. It is a family reunion. Literally. My eighth cousin, Henry, who has become a regular at this party, I mean—[*laughter*]—where is "Henry the Eighth"—he's, he's—there he is, he's back there. Good to see you, Henry. So is his good buddy, Ollie Hayes, who owns my favorite pub in Moneygall. [*Laughter*] And while many of you are far from home today, I'm sure you've found plenty of green in the red, white, and blue because we've got 30 or 40 million family members here in the United States and millions more who wish they were.

Now, Shaw said that an Irishman's heart is nothing but his imagination. And if there's any place that can set the imagination on fire, it is Ireland. I remember my own visit to Dublin and Moneygall and Belfast. The unrushed landscape. The unrushed pint of black. [*Laughter*] Waiting for that perfect pint is 90 seconds well spent. [*Laughter*] A people noted for bouts of great joy and the belt of a late-night song. People known for the good things: slow days, hard lessons, high notes.

But Irish Americans are also rightly proud of what we've done here in America: the cities our ancestors helped build, the canals they dug, the tracks they laid, the shipyards and factories they labored in, enduring all manner of intolerance and insult to carve out a place for themselves and their children in this new world.

They put their full hearts into their work, even as their hearts were far from home. In 1897, at an Irish Fair held in New York, dirt was shipped over from each of Ireland's counties and laid out on a map. At least one immigrant knelt in prayer, grateful to be back in Fermanagh again, even if only for an instant. Meanwhile, thousands of young Irish women moved to America to find work as domestic servants. "Not a day goes by," one said, "that I don't look at the Moon and say it's the same in Ireland."

So they persevered. For the story of the Irish in America is a story of overcoming hardship through strength and sacrifice and faith and family. It's an idea central to Saint Patrick's himself: faith in the unseen, a belief in something better around the bend. And that's why the Irish did more than help build America—I'm very impressed, by the way, whoever just shushed. [*Laughter*]. Joe Crowley. [*Applause*] I was going to wait until the Taoiseach spoke to shush everybody, but Joe handled his business. I like that, Joe. But the Irish did more than just build America, they helped to sharpen the idea of America: the notion that no matter who you are, where you come from,

what your last name is, in this country, you can make it.

And today we revel in that idea. We remember the great Irish Americans of the past: those who struggled in obscurity, those who rose to the highest levels of politics and business and the arts. We celebrate the ideals at the heart of the Irish American story, ones that people everywhere can embrace: friendship and family and hard work and humility, fairness and dignity, and the persistent belief that tomorrow will be better than today.

Yeats is one of my favorite poets, and the Taoiseach honored me by giving me a slim volume of his favorite works. So in this 150th anniversary year of his birth, I'll just close with words from one of his plays: "I have believed the best of every man. And find that to believe it is enough to make a bad man show him at his best—or even a good man swing his lantern higher."

And with that, I will turn it over to our guest, a man who always swings his lantern higher—[*laughter*]—the Taoiseach of Ireland: Prime Minister Kenny.

[*At this point, Prime Minister Kenny spoke briefly in Irish, and no translation was provided. He then spoke in English as follows.*]

Prime Minister Kenny. [*Inaudible*]—means "White House."

President Obama. White House.

Prime Minister Kenny. Is féidir linn. [*Laughter*] Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen, Fionnuala and I appreciate the honor that you bestow on the Irish people today, and we're very honored to be here in the White House on this St. Patrick's Day.

Let me extend and thank you for your hospitality to the Irish people and those of Irish descent here in the United States who are represented here this evening. I want to thank you, President Obama and Vice President Biden, for your friendship and for your support for Ireland, North and South.

When we met in the Oval Office this morning, says he—[*laughter*]—sure—we had the opportunity to discuss the progress that we are making in our economic recovery through the perseverance and the determination of the Irish people. The United States remains our most important economic partner, and the support of the U.S. has been critical to the progress that we are making. The improvement that the U.S. economy is making under your leadership, President, is essential not only to jobs and growth in the United States, but also to Ireland's recovery and growth throughout the global economy.

Let me thank you, in particular, Mr. President, for the work that you are doing to achieve immigration reform and, in particular, for the executive actions, which you announced last November. The undocumented Irish represent a small proportion of the 11 million people affected by this issue across the United States, but I can also tell you that almost every family in our country is related to or knows somebody who is caught up in this deeply distressing situation. Any progress that would allow our undocumented to come out of the shadows and be free to travel home for family events would be very welcome, and your very welcome Ambassador, Kevin O'Malley, understands this deeply from his own—on his own personal family side.

We also want to see a legal pathway for the future for Irish people to make their full contribution here if they so choose. I can assure you this evening, Mr. President, that we will continue to add our voice to the many voices calling on this Congress to pass immigration reform legislation as soon as possible.

Mr. President, I also want to acknowledge and to thank you for your ongoing support and your commitment and your engagement in the peace process. Northern Ireland has been transformed through the implementation of the Good Friday agreement. Huge steps have been taken with the work of building a shared future, bringing an end to sectarian division, and to ensure that future generations will grow in mutual respect and tolerance is still a work in progress. The Stormont House Agreement reached last December is a welcome step—a welcome further step forward, and let me publicly acknowledge the role of Senator Gary Hart, appointed by you and Vice President

Biden, as your representative in reaching and helping parties to reach that agreement.

As you will have seen in recent days, implementation can always be the hardest part of any agreement, and I urge the Northern Ireland parties—as you have done, Mr. President—to do all that they can to ensure that the current roadblock is overcome, as I'm sure it will be, and that the agreement can be implemented in full. We therefore appreciate your ongoing engagement and your support, and that of all our friends in the United States, as we continue to build permanent peace and reconciliation in Ireland.

Mr. President, as you said on the conclusion of the Stormont House Agreement, where there is courage and a will, these changes can happen. In your brilliant Selma speech a few weeks ago, you said that the march is not yet over. I agree with that sentiment. Nor can it be, until democratically elected politicians decide to make decisions that are of benefit to all.

In Ireland, we're now in a decade of commemorations marking the hundredth anniversary of the tumultuous events that resulted in our country achieving its independence. Next year, we commemorate the anniversary of the 1916 Rising in Ireland and around the globe, including a major festival here in Washington in the Kennedy Center.

This year, as you know, is also the 150th anniversary of the birth of the great poet W.B. Yeats, to whom you have referred, Mr. President. We will mark that event with many occasions in Ireland, here in the U.S., and around the world. And to mark that particular anniversary, Mr. President, this year, the Shamrock Bowl is engraved with one of his most famous and beautiful poems: "He Wishes for the Cloth of Heaven." The last line reads in that, Mr. President, if I recall it correctly, to paraphrase it, tread softly, for you tread upon our dreams.

[*Prime Minister Kenny spoke briefly in Irish, and no translation was provided. He then spoke in English as follows.*]

Prime Minister Kenny. Happy St. Patrick's Day to you all. Have a wonderful occasion here in the present—[*applause*].

President Obama. Everybody, enjoy yourselves. Have fun, don't break anything, and you can take the paper napkins, but not the cloth ones. [*Laughter*] They don't belong to be, and I want my security deposit back. [*Laughter*] Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:34 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Richard N. Haass, president, Council on Foreign Relations. He also referred to his cousin Henry Healy. Prime Minister Kenny referred to former Sen. Gary W. Hart, in his capacity as the U.S. Secretary of State's Personal Representative for Northern Ireland.

Remarks to the City Club of Cleveland and a Question-and-Answer Session in Cleveland, Ohio
March 18, 2015

The President. Hello, Cleveland! Thank you so much. Thank you. Thank you, everybody. Please, please, have a seat. It's good to be back in Cleveland.

Let me begin by thanking Paul for the wonderful introduction. I want to acknowledge some of my favorite Members of Congress. [*Laughter*] Senator Sherrod Brown is here. I actually like his wife Connie a little more. [*Laughter*] I'm not alone in that. But he's okay too. [*Laughter*] Congresswoman Kaptur is here. Congresswoman Fudge is here. Mayor Jackson is here. Thank you so much. Where's the Mayor? He's around here somewhere.

I want to thank Don Moulthrop and the members of the City Club for inviting me here today. It is wonderful to be back in this city. And I see a lot of friends and, in some cases, mentors. Pastor, it's wonderful to see you again. Otis Moss is one of my favorite people.

Now, every sitting President since Ronald Reagan has come here, to the City Club of Cleveland, to take your questions. And that's because this is an institution that reflects what is a truly American idea. That's the belief that all of us have a role to play in resolving the most important issues of our time. In a democracy, the most important office is the office of citizen. And the City Club tradition reflects that.

Now, over the course of my Presidency, one that began in the depths of a historic crisis, no issue has been more important than the future of our economy. That's certainly been of great interest in Ohio and in Cleveland. No topic has weighed more heavily on the minds of ordinary families, and no subject is more worthy of a great, big, open debate.

Seventy-five years ago, another President came here to Cleveland to engage in this debate. He was nearing the end of his second term, 8 years in office marked by a devastating Depression, a hard-fought recovery, fierce political divisions at home, looming threats overseas. But for all the challenges of a changing world, FDR refused to accept the notion that we are anything less than the masters of our fate. "We are characters in this living book of democracy," he said. "But we are also its author. It falls upon us now to say whether the chapters that are to come will tell a story of retreat or of continued advance."

Now, that's a pretty good summary of where we are today. That was the choice that was laid out back then: a story of retreat, or a story of continued advance. America chose the latter, and we're better for it. And three-quarters of a century later, we face a similar choice. In a world changing even faster than his, do we retreat from the realities of a 21st-century economy? Or do we continue to advance, together, to renew this country's founding promise of opportunity for everybody and not just some?

So before I take questions, I want to spend some time talking about that choice, and I want to set the stage by talking about where the economy is today.

Following the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression—in fact, by some measures, the contraction of our economy was faster and deeper than the great recessions; we just pulled out of it faster because we had learned some lessons from the past—we're now in the midst of the longest streak of private sector job growth on record: 60 consecutive months, 5 straight years, 12 million new jobs.

America's businesses have added more than 200,000 jobs each month for 12 straight months. That's the first time that's happened in nearly 40 years. Our unemployment rate has fallen from a peak of 10 percent in 2009. When I first came into office, we were losing jobs at a pace of almost 800,000 jobs per month; today, the unemployment rate is at 5.5 percent. Just last year, we saw the fastest unemployment rate decline in 30 years. And in one of the most hopeful signs, middle class wages are finally starting to tick up again, finally starting to go up.

Now, this progress is no accident. First and foremost, it's the direct result of you, the drive and determination of the American people. But I'm going to take a little credit. [*Laughter*] It's also the result of decisions made by my administration, in partnership from—with some of these Members of Congress who are here, to prevent a second depression and to lay a new foundation for growth and prosperity. And a lot of those decisions were controversial. And not—and then, there was a lot of resistance and obstruction. But we decided to continue to advance.

We believed that if the last decade was defined by outsourcing of good jobs overseas, then we could define this decade by bringing back good jobs to America. And today, there are more job openings in the United States than at any time since 2001. The auto industry that we rescued, despite the fact that it was not popular at the time, is firing on all cylinders. That's making a difference right here in Ohio.

Factories are opening their doors at the fastest pace in nearly two decades. Over the last 5 years, manufacturers have added jobs at a rate not seen since the 1980s. Everybody talked about manufacturing being dead. You know what, manufacturing is actually growing at a faster pace than the rest of the economy.

And more foreign companies are realizing that "Made in the U.S.A." is a trademark to be proud of, and they're choosing to invest in America, something that I'm going to discuss next week at our SelectUSA Summit, where we get local and State officials and economic development organizations to meet with foreign investors from around the world in one-stop shopping to start getting more investment and more businesses right here in the United States.

We believed that we could prepare our kids and our workers for a more competitive world. And today, our younger students earn the highest math and reading scores on record. Our high school graduation rate hit another all-time high. More Americans are earning their degrees than ever before.

We believed we could grow the economy and create new jobs even while we were reducing our dependence on foreign oil and even as we were tackling climate change and protecting our planet. Today, America's not just number one in oil and gas. We're number one in wind power. Last year was the biggest year for solar power in our history. We're producing 3 times as much wind power and 10 times as much solar power as we did when I came into office.

Every 3 weeks, we produce as much solar power as we did in all of 2008. And just last month, the world's largest solar installation came online in the California desert. The solar industry is adding jobs 10 times faster than the rest of the economy. And meanwhile, thanks to lower gas prices and higher fuel standards, the typical family this year should save more than 700 bucks at the pump.

We believed that sensible regulations could prevent another crisis and shield families from ruin and encourage fair competition. And today, we've got the tools to stop taxpayer-funded bailouts. We've got a new consumer watchdog to protect families from predatory lending and credit card practices, saving billions of dollars to American consumers.

Oh, and by the way, there's this thing called the Affordable Care Act. More than 16 million more Americans have gained the security of health care coverage. We've cut the ranks of the uninsured by a third, thanks to some tough, proud votes by these Members of Congress. Last year, the growth in health care premiums, the costs for business, matched its lowest level on record. If premiums had kept on growing over the last 4 years at the rate they had in the previous decade, the average family premium would be $1,800 higher than it is today.

Now, we don't get a lot of credit for that. But keep in mind that some of the reforms that we're putting in place are not only giving more people insurance, but we're actually reducing the overall costs: $1,800 in people's pockets. They don't notice it, because it's what didn't happen. That's $1,800 that firms can use to hire and invest; $1,800 that you're spending on a computer for your kids or to help pay down debt and stabilize your finances or put into retirement.

And finally, we believed that we could lay this new foundation for growth while still getting our fiscal house in order. You'll recall that when I first came into office, deficits were skyrocketing, partly because the economy was plummeting: less tax revenue coming in, more going out. And the notion was that the steps we took to ensure the economy recovered was going to cause even higher deficits, red ink as far as the eye could see. Well, since I took office, we've cut our deficits as a share of our economy by about two-thirds. Two-thirds!

And looking forward, our long-term deficit projections have improved as well, in part because we've done such a good job in controlling health care costs. The Affordable Care Act alone will cut our deficits by more than a trillion dollars over the next two decades. The slowing growth in health care costs has saved the Medicare system tens of billions of dollars. Health care was the single biggest factor driving up our projected deficits. It's now the single biggest factor driving them down.

This is progress that every American can be proud of. Now, we've got a long way to go. I am not satisfied; I know you aren't either. We've got a lot more work to do. Any American will tell you that. But we have emerged from what was a once-in-a-generation crisis

better positioned for the future than any of our competitors. We've picked ourselves up, dusted ourselves off, retooled, retrained, refocused. The United States of America is coming back.

Now, I want to return to the issue of the debate that we were having then because it bears on the debate we're having now. It's important to note that at every step that we've taken over the past 6 years, we were told our goals were misguided, they were too ambitious, that my administration's policies would crush jobs and explode deficits and destroy the economy forever. Remember that?

Audience members. Yes.

The President. Because sometimes, we don't do the instant replay—[*laughter*]—we don't run the tape back, and then we end up having the same argument going forward.

One Republican in Congress warned our policies would "diminish employment" and "diminish stock prices." Diminish stock prices. [*Laughter*] The stock market has doubled since I came into office. Corporate profits are—corporate balance sheets are stronger than they have ever been—because of my terrible business policies. [*Laughter*]

One Republican Senator claimed we faced trillion-dollar deficits as far as the eye can see. Another predicted my reelection would spike gas prices to $6.60 a gallon. [*Laughter*] I don't know how he came up with that figure—$6.60. [*Laughter*] My opponent in that last election pledged that he could bring down the unemployment rate to 6 percent by 2016—next year—at the end of next year. It's 5.5 now.

And right here in Cleveland, the leader of the House Republicans, a good friend of mine—[*laughter*]—he captured his party's economic theories by critiquing mine with a very simple question. "Where are the jobs?" he said. "Where are the jobs?" I'm sure there was a headline in the Plain Dealer or one of the papers: "Where's the Jobs?"

Well, after 12 million new jobs, a stock market that has more than doubled, deficits that have been cut by two-thirds, health care inflation at the lowest rate in nearly 50 years, manufacturing coming back, auto industry coming back, clean energy doubled, I've come not only to answer that question, but I want to return to the debate that is central to this country and the alternative economic theory that's presented by the other side.

Because their theory does not change. It really doesn't. It's a theory that says, if we do little more than just cut taxes for those at the very top, if we strip out regulations and let special interests write their own rules, prosperity trickles down to the rest of us. And I take the opposite view. And I take it not for ideological reasons, but for historic reasons, because of the evidence.

We know from the facts that are all—that they're there for all to see—that America does better, our economy does better, everybody does better when the middle class does better and we've got more ladders for people to get into the middle class if they're willing to work hard. We do better when everyone grows together: top, middle, bottom. We do better when everyone has a chance not only to benefit from America's success, but also to contribute to America's success. And we know from more recent history that when we stray from that ideal, it doesn't turn out well. We've now got evidence there is a better way, there is a better approach. And I'm calling it middle class economics.

For the first 8 years of this century, before I came into office, we tried trickle-down economics. We slashed taxes for folks at the top, stripped out regulations, didn't make investments in the things we know we need to grow. At the end of those 8 years, we had soaring deficits, record job losses, an economy in crippling recession.

In the years since then, we've tried middle class economics. Today, we've got dramatically lower deficits, a record streak of job creation, an economy that's steadily growing.

So when we, the American people, when the public evaluates who's got the better argument here, we've got to look at the facts. It's not abstractions. There may have been a time when you could just say, well, those two theories are equally valid. They're differences of opinion. They could have been abstract economic argu-

ments in a book somewhere. But not anymore. Reality has rendered its judgment: Trickle-down economics does not work, and middle class economics does.

And that's what we should keep in mind when we think about what's going to take us forward: not down a path where we slow down businesses by slashing investments in the future; not a path where we put our economy at risk again with Government shutdowns or fiscal shutdowns; not down a path where just a few of us do spectacularly well and folks who are working hard see their incomes, their wages, their financial security erode. We need to go forward to an economy that's generating rising incomes and chances for everybody who is willing to work hard; on that continued advance where we invest in our future, give working Americans the tools they need to determine their own fate—research, education, infrastructure, job training.

We know the recipe for growth, and we know that we can make growth broad based. And we can raise incomes and wages in the process. And those incomes and wages then get plowed back into businesses and investment, and we get on a virtuous cycle.

Now, a good place to start down a stronger path involves America's budget, the blueprint for what we believe this country should be. Where should we go? The budget is not just numbers on a page, it reflects our values and our priorities.

Now, Republicans in Congress have been working hard to reposition their rhetoric around the economy. They started noticing that people would like to see someone champion the middle class and folks who are trying to get in the middle class. So we've seen a shift in how they talk about the issues.

There was one Republican who said she couldn't agree with me more that we need to be helping working moms and dads more. Another wrote a policy memo saying that Republicans must define themselves as the party of the American worker, the party of higher wages. Another urged his party to shout at the top of its lungs, the GOP is the ticket to the middle class.

Now, this is good. This is a good development. I'm encouraged by this, because once you get everybody talking about the same thing, now we can decide, all right, how do we do it? If we can at least share our goals, if the goal is strengthening the middle class, creating more ladders of opportunity for the middle class, raising wages, that's good. There's nothing I'd like more than an opposition party that works with me to help hard-working Americans get ahead. I don't have another election to run. [*Laughter*] Come, let's go. Let's work.

Now, the problem, though, is, so far, at least, the rhetoric doesn't match the reality. The walk doesn't sync up with the talk. And all you have to do is look at the budget that House Republicans put forward just yesterday. And it's a budget that doesn't just fail to embrace middle class economics, it's the opposite of middle class economics, doubles down on trickle-down.

I don't expect you, by the way, to read the budget—theirs or mine—but you can do some fact-checking on this. Their budget doles out even more to those who already have the most, makes massive cuts to investments that benefit all of us, asks middle class families to foot the bill. It's a budget that claims that reducing our deficit should be our very highest priority, despite the fact that the deficit has been reduced by two-thirds. But its very first proposal, its centerpiece is to spend hundreds of billions of dollars, maybe even trillions of dollars, on another giant tax cut slanted overwhelmingly in favor of those at the top. If you are claiming that deficit reduction is your number-one priority, how can you start by giving a tax cut to everybody at the top and not doing much to help folks down the economic pyramid?

Under the Republican budget, millionaires and billionaires would get an average tax cut of more than $50,000 per year. Translation: The average millionaire would take home about as much in tax cuts as the average middle class American makes in an entire year. Now, they say they'll also close high-income tax loopholes for folks at the top, which I've put some very specific proposals for how we can do that.

Their budget does not name a single loophole it would close. Not one.

This budget does provide nothing to prevent tax cuts from expiring for 26 million working families and students. I mean, these are folks who for almost two decades now have gone without a raise, but their budget lets these tax cuts expire. That's the equivalent of a thousand-dollar-a-year pay cut for these families.

So you can call cutting taxes for the top 1 percent while letting taxes rise for working families a lot of things. What you can't call it is a ticket to the middle class. That you cannot do.

Allowing tax cuts for working families to expire doesn't get you close to this "budgets cut at all cost" goal of a $5 trillion in deficit reduction. Republican leaders say we need to keep bringing down our deficits. I think we should bring down our deficits; my budget would keep our deficits below 3 percent of GDP. And that's a rate that most economists agree protects our fiscal health. But because House Republicans want to balance the budget without asking any sacrifices of the wealthiest Americans—in fact, asking them to sacrifice less—that means that everybody else has to sacrifice more. Middle class has to sacrifice more. Those working to join the middle class have to sacrifice more.

The authors of this budget were careful not to get too specific about the cuts they proposed, and they kind of imply that, well, no matter who you are, somebody else is going to bear the burden. But compared to the plan I've put forward, if the cuts they've proposed were to fall equally on everybody, here is just some of what would happen over the next few years. We're getting to questions. I just want to—I've really got to bear down on this thing.

Investments in education would be cut to their lowest levels since 2000—15 years ago—at a time when we know we need to be upping our game in education because of competition around the world: 157,000 fewer children would have the chance to get early education through Head Start; more than 8 million low-income students would see their financial aid cut. Investments in job training would be cut to the point where more than 4 million fewer workers would have the chance to earn higher wages through programs to help them upgrade their skills. We would end partnerships that help 30,000 small manufacturers grow their businesses and create good jobs, including right here in Cleveland.

These aren't just new cuts; these are some of the greatest hits on this broken record. [*Laughter*]

And just as more working families are finally beginning to feel some hard-fought stability and security in their lives, the Republican budget would strip health insurance for millions of Americans. It would take away coverage from millions more who rely on Medicaid, including right here in Ohio: nursing home patients, children with autism, parents of children with disabilities who need at-home care. It would try once again to gut the guarantee at the center of Medicare by turning it into a voucher program.

Instead of the promise that health care will be there for you when you need it, you get a roll of the dice. If you get sick and that voucher is enough to cover the costs of your care, then you win. But if not, you lose. Programs that help low-income parents care for sick children or buy food for their families or put a roof over their heads, all those would be in the crosshairs.

And at a time of new and evolving threats overseas, the Republican budget, despite all the talk they have about national security, would actually cut our core national security funding to its lowest level in a decade. And still, those at the top aren't asked to sacrifice a single dime.

So lower taxes for the most well off, higher taxes for working families; gutted investments in education, job training, infrastructure, military, and our national security; kicking tens of millions of Americans off their health insurance; ending Medicare as we know it.

If you have heard these kinds of arguments about this kind of budget before, that's because you have seen this kind of budget before. Republicans in Congress have put forward the same proposals year after year after year, regardless of the realities of the economy. When the economy is in a slump, we need tax cuts.

When the economy is doing well, you know what, let's try some tax cuts. [*Laughter*]

We know now that the gloom-and-doom predictions that justified this budget 3, 4, 5 years ago were wrong. Despite the economic progress, despite the mountains of new evidence, their approach hasn't changed.

There's nothing wrong with changing your opinion if the underlying facts change. Serious economic proposals change when the underlying assumptions are proven false. If Republicans believe we should adhere to a set of abstract principles, even though they hurt the middle class, then they should make the case. Show us. Prove it to us. If they believe it's time to end the social contract that sustains so many of us, the basic bargain of shared sacrifice and shared responsibility, own it and make the argument.

But the—you can't credibly claim that this vision is about helping working families get ahead or that this budget is a path to prosperity. It's the same argument I'm having about health care. It was one thing for them to argue against Obamacare before it was put in place. Every prediction they've made about it turned out to be wrong. So you—it's working better than even I expected. [*Laughter*] But it doesn't matter. Evidence be damned, it's still a disaster. Well, why?

I mean, the truth is, the budget they're putting forward and the theories they're putting forward are a path to prosperity for those who have already prospered. And in that sense, it's a story of retreat.

And I'm offering a different path. The budget I've put forward is built on middle class economics: the idea that everybody does best when everybody gets their fair shot and everybody is doing their fair share, everybody plays by the same set of rules. And it reflects the realities of the new economy by giving every American the tools they need to get ahead in a fast-paced, highly competitive, constantly changing world.

It means helping working families feel more secure in an ever-changing economy. That's why my budget makes new investments to make it easier for folks to afford childcare and college and health care and paid leave and retirement, lowering the taxes of working families, putting thousands of dollars back into their pockets each year.

Middle class economics means preparing Americans to earn higher wages down the road. That's why my budget makes new investments from pre-K to midcareer job training. I want to make sure all our kids get a great education from the earliest age and that young people can afford to go to college without getting buried under a mountain of debt.

And so we're working with private companies and community colleges and universities and businesses to provide apprenticeships and on-the-job training and other pathways into the middle class. And I've proposed making 2 years of community college as free and universal as high school is today, to up our game.

Now, third, middle class economics means building the most competitive economy anywhere so that our businesses can keep churning out high-wage jobs for our workers to fill. And right before I came here, I went to MAGNET. It's a manufacturing incubator right here in Cleveland where smaller companies are making everything from airplane parts and medical devices to whiskey. I did not sample the whiskey before I came here. [*Laughter*] Although I'm taking a sample home. [*Laughter*]

And this partnership is bringing good manufacturing jobs back to Cleveland. The Republican budget would cut the whole thing entirely. If something is working, why would we get rid of it? We should invest in it. Which is why today I announced nearly $500 million in new public and private investment for American manufacturing. And that includes a new manufacturing hub that will make America a leader in producing high-tech fabrics for uniforms our soldiers wear in battle.

And 21st-century businesses need 21st-century infrastructure, which is why my budget invests in modern ports and stronger bridges and faster trains and the fastest Internet and invests in basic research so that the jobs and industries of the future are created right here in the United States. And we can pay for these investments in a responsible way. Not by adding

to the deficit, we just need to cut wasteful loopholes and ask those at the very top to pay their fair share and reform our Tax Code to make our businesses more competitive.

And we can keep our exports and protect our workers with a strong new trade deal—first in Asia, then in Europe—that aren't just free, but are also fair. I've had a lot of conversations with the delegation from Ohio about this, because here in Ohio, you saw firsthand a lot of past trade deals didn't always live up to the hype. And that's why the trade deal I'm negotiating now, the Trans-Pacific Partnership, would reform NAFTA with higher labor standards, higher environmental standards, new tools to hold countries accountable; would focus on the impact it's having on American workers; and would make sure that the rules of the 21st-century economy in some of the largest markets in the world aren't written by China. They need to be written by the United States of America, and that's what this does.

So helping hard-working families make ends meet, giving them the tools they need for a new economy, revving the engines of growth and competitiveness—that's what middle class economics offers. That's where America needs to go. If we make these investments in ourselves and our prosperity and our future, this economy is not just going to be stronger a year from now or 5 years from now, it will stronger for decades. And it falls upon us now—remember those words of FDR—it falls upon us now to say whether the chapters that are to come will tell a story of retreat or a story of continued advance.

I believe in continued advance. The challenges that this generation of Americans has faced, they're less dire than those that the greatest generation endured. But we've got the same will. We've got the same drive. We've got the same innate optimism required to shape another American century. We know what works. We know what we have to do. We've just got to put aside the stale and outmoded debates, reject failed policies, embrace the policies that we know work, embrace the promise of the future. And we're not just going to then move forward, we're going to write the next great chapter of our continued advance in this living book of democracy.

All right. Thank you, Cleveland. God bless you.

Let's take some questions. Come on. Okay. So, Paul, I can just start calling on people, right?

City Club of Cleveland Board President Paul Harris. Yes, sir.

The President. Okay, I like that. [*Laughter*]

All right, so the only thing I'm going to do is—raise your hand. I'll call on you. If you could stand up, introduce yourself. And I'm going to go boy, girl, boy, girl. [*Laughter*] All right. We'll start with that young lady right there—no, no, right here. Yes, you.

Legal Aid Reform

Q. All right. Thank you.

The President. What's your name?

Q. My name is Colleen Cotter. I'm the executive director of the Legal Aid Society of Cleveland. And my question for you, Mr. President—thank you, first, so much for coming to Cleveland. My question is, you talked about the importance of everyone playing by the same rules.

The President. Right.

Q. Unfortunately, millions of Americans—because we do not have the right to court-appointed counsel in civil cases—cannot enforce the rules that are out to protect them, whether as tenants, consumers, preventing foreclosure. How do you propose that we address that very important issue?

The President. Well, as you know, we've worked hard to continue to support legal aid around the country. This was a target of slashed budgets early in the previous administration. We have not fully recovered. And with the existing Congress, it's unlikely that we get the kind of bump up that we need.

Two things, I think, we can do, though, is, one, in addition to the Federal Government helping, I think we can elicit more from law firms than they currently cough up. Young lawyers are eager to participate if it's structured properly.

The other thing is to create in various jurisdictions more efficient, effective civil procedures, potentially, that can streamline the process. Because a lot of the clients that you work with, they don't—we don't need a full-blown court process and filings and motions and—that's taking forever. And oftentimes, when people are in desperate straits, let's say, they've been cheated on or something by a landlord, or by—they bought a product, and it turned out to be faulty, and they're trying to get some relief—they can't necessarily afford some lengthy process. And your office should be reserved for the toughest cases.

So are there ways in which we can structure more effective dispute resolution mechanisms? Now, that's going to necessarily operate probably jurisdiction by jurisdiction. But some jurisdictions have come up with some creative ways to fill the holes that arose as a consequence of the legal aid cuts that took place a long time ago. And what we should do is highlight those best practices, see if we can get them duplicated across the board.

But thank you for the good work that you're doing. Proud of you.

All right. It's a gentleman's turn. Let's see. Right there. You, yes. Nice-looking bow tie.

Q. Thank you.

The President. You're welcome.

Community Colleges

Q. My name is Greg Hutchins. I'm the superintendent in Shaker Heights City Schools. You visited us twice already. That was nice.

The President. That's a great school system.

Q. Yes, I wasn't the superintendent at that time, but it was a great, and still is a great, school system.

My question is regarding the community college initiative and how it affects the middle class. I think that some of our community colleges here in Cleveland, as well as across the country, they get a bad reputation that they don't provide a high-quality education, which I believe that they do. How can we better convey a message to all of our constituents and possible future community college–enrolled students, how can we convey the message that the community college does have a high-quality education and we can prepare our kids?

The President. Well, I tell you what, I'm doing my darnedest to advertise. Because one of our greatest comparative advantages is our higher education system here in the United States. Obviously, we've got the best universities in the world, and people flock from everywhere to try to get an education. But we also have an unparalleled community college system. And there are places like Lorraine that are doing great work.

The challenge we've got is that they're underutilized. Oftentimes, we're not linking what community college is doing with high schools, on the one hand, and 4-year universities and businesses, on the other. So part of our initiative is not just to make the first 2 years of community college free, because not everybody needs a 4-year education. Some people may be interested in graphic design or interested in manufacturing processes or even, in some cases, high-tech jobs that don't require a 4-year degree, but they do require some advanced training. And if they can get that first 2 years free without debt, plugged into a business, they've saved money. They don't have all those student loans to pay. They can work for a time, learn more in their career. Then, maybe they go back and decide to get a higher degree.

If they decide to take the community college and then springboard into a 4-year university, they transfer their credits. They've just saved themselves half the cost of that 4-year college degree.

So what we're trying to do is to create more and more partnerships suited for the particular inclinations, aptitudes, needs of the public. In some cases, what's needed, for example, for a midcareer person, is a quick training program that gets them in a job right away. So increasingly, what we're doing is working with community colleges to reach out to the businesses in their community where there are job openings and have the business help design the training program, collapse the training program.

A midcareer person who needs a job right away—maybe a single mom or a guy who's

been laid off and now needs to get back in the workforce—they don't have the luxury necessarily of 2 years of study. Get them into something where 6, 8, 10 weeks of training, and right now we—if you complete this successfully, we know there's going to be a job for you because the business helped design the program.

If you are a high school student who is interested in doing something that doesn't necessarily require a 4-year degree, we're getting community colleges to link up with the high school ahead of time. The high school student can then start getting credit, get a hands-on experience, in some cases, with business who are partnering with the community college. And now that high school student has gotten a head start on moving into the career, and they're also saving money in the process.

If it's a student who wants to go to 4-year university, but they don't have the money to, let's say, come right away to Cleveland State—even though Cleveland State is a pretty good price relative to a lot of other schools—go to that community college first, but make sure that they are getting up front the kind of counseling that they need so that they're taking the credits that are transferrable in the fields that they need, so that they're not wasting time in the community college, taking out Pell grants and loans, then they get to the 4-year university and they have got to start all over again. Right?

So in each of these cases, by us linking businesses, 4-year institutions, community colleges, high schools, we can create a series of pathways of success. And it can be lifelong. And the great thing about community colleges is they're flexible in ways that 4-year institutions, because of the nature of those institutions, it's a little harder to do. Community colleges, they can adapt and meet a need quickly. So a new business comes to town, we need machine tool operators, or we need coders, or we need whatever it is. Potentially, you can design something quickly that's effective and makes an immediate difference.

So we've put a lot of resources into community colleges. We are highlighting these programs, encouraging the kinds of lengths that I just described, and we're going to keep on doing it.

Okay. Let's see. Right there, go ahead. She was very excited to ask me a question. [*Laughter*]

NCAA Basketball Championship

Q. My name is Helen Sheehan, and welcome to Cleveland. We love this city. Hard-working city and hard-working county. So thank you for coming. I have a two-part question. First, who's in your bracket? [*Laughter*]

The President. I wasn't that creative. I think Kentucky is going to take it. But you know, I haven't won in—since my first year in office. [*Laughter*] Clearly, I'm not spending as much time watching college basketball as I once did. [*Laughter*] So I wouldn't necessarily take my bracket and copy it, although I suspect I'm not the only person picking Kentucky. [*Laughter*]

Q. No, I have too.

The President. That's what I figured.

Congressional Gridlock/Infrastructure/Immigration/Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act/Political Participation

Q. The second part of my question is, since you've been in office, what has surprised you the most?

The President. That's an interesting question: What surprised me the most? I'll start by saying what has not surprised me. [*Laughter*] I'm not surprised by the decency and determination and grit and resilience and hard work of the American people and the fact that they're not as divided as Washington would seem to reflect.

Because I travel around the country a lot. One of the great things about being President is, you can pretty much go anywhere. [*Laughter*] You say, hey, can I—I want to come by. Okay. [*Laughter*] And so you can go to factories, and you can go to community colleges, and you can go to national parks and go to every State and meet people. And it turns out that what I talked about back in 2004 about this being a United States of America, it really

is true outside of Washington. And that's encouraging. That makes me happy.

What has surprised me, even though I had served in the Senate, was the continued difficulties in Congress getting stuff done that shouldn't be controversial.

There are some issues that I knew would be controversial. I mean, we know that if there's a debate in Congress about abortion, that's going to be controversial. There are strong-held views on each side. They're hard to reconcile. We understand that. And that's part of democracy, and it never gets perfectly resolved.

But I have been pushing for us to fund infrastructure since I came into office, because we've got two trillion dollars' worth of dilapidated roads, bridges, sewer lines, and then, there's a whole new infrastructure that we have to build in terms of a smart grid that's more secure and reliable in terms of how we use energy and making it more efficient. There are broadband lines that still need to be going out into every part of the country.

Now, the Recovery Act that I passed, with the help of these Members of Congress, when we first came in didn't just help to avert recession. It also was the largest investment in infrastructure in decades. And we made significant progress, for example, in just getting broadband lines out into rural areas. So we made some progress on it. But we've still got a whole bunch to do.

And if you talk privately to our Republican friends, they'll say, yes, I know, we really need to do some infrastructure. Well, why aren't we doing it? And the reason is the degree to which constant campaigning and sort of the polarization of the bases and the inability, it seems, to just agree on a core set of facts means even when some of our Republican friends want to work with us, it's hard to do. They are worried that they'll get attacked or they'll be viewed as compromisers or they'll get a primary challenge when somebody—by somebody further to the right, and it becomes hard to just get basic stuff done.

And obviously, the greatest example of this was when the Government was shut down, or just recently, the threat that the Department of Homeland Security was going to be shut down.

We can have a significant debate about immigration. Not everybody is going to agree with my view that we are a nation of immigrants and we have a broken system and we can craft an immigration agenda that holds into account folks who came here illegally, forces them to have a background check, they've got to pay back-taxes, but gives them a pathway and, in turn, strengthens our borders. That's my view. It's good for the economy. I can look—point to the evidence. But I understand some folks won't agree with me.

The notion, though, that you would then threaten to not fund the very department that is responsible for securing our borders because you're mad that our borders are not secured—[*laughter*]—that's not a good way of doing business. So that surprises me a little bit. [*Laughter*]

And I think that the other—this is a connected issue, and I'll make this last point and go to the next question.

I think it's hard for voters to see why it is that things aren't working in Washington. They get frustrated that they're not working, but there's this kind of sense, well, a plague on both their houses, partly because the media is so splintered up. If you're watching Fox News, you get an entirely different reality than if you're watching MSNBC. And so everything is just, like, an opinion. But there are hard, cold facts about how things work and who is being responsible and who's not. And it—the challenge is making sure that voters are aware of that and then hold elected officials accountable for their positions.

That's why I talked about the budget. Now, the Republican budget will not end up getting passed. My budget won't be passed, given I've got to work with a Republican Congress. But it is a reflection of what our priorities are. And it's good for people to know what's in there. And our democracy only works when we're informed enough that we can say, well, you know what, I don't think we should cut Medicaid for families that have a disabled child. That's not who we are. And I know my neighbor who relies on that. That's important.

I may not like Obama, but if I've got—if we know that there's 16 million people who now have health insurance, and my health insurance hasn't been affected, and in fact, health care premiums across the board are going up at a slower rate than they have in 50 years, it's not clear to me why I would want to have 16 million suddenly not have health insurance who are then going to be going to the emergency room, and then I'm going to end up paying for them because somebody has got to pay for them, and I'm going to pay higher premiums.

That's—it's that, if we know what the issues are and who is taking what positions, then I think our democracy functions well. Right now what happens is, people just hear, "There's a mess, there's an argument, they're at it again," and then oftentimes people just withdraw and don't vote. And then people are cynical and dissatisfied, and that actually empowers special interests and the status quo, which we want to discourage.

All right. That was probably too long an answer. [*Laughter*]

It's a gentleman's turn. Let me ask that young man right there in the purple shirt. That's a good-looking shirt right there. Yes. Okay.

Public Service/The President's Advice to Young People

Q. Like, how can you inspire children——

The President. What's your name?

Q. Oh, my name is Nelson.

The President. Nelson.

Q. I'm a high school student at Facing History New Tech.

The President. What year are you in?

Q. A junior.

The President. Junior? Starting to think about colleges and all that?

Q. Yes.

The President. Yes? Starting to have to take all those tests? Like, Malia is going through this. Yes. [*Laughter*] Getting enough sleep?

Q. Yes.

The President. Okay, good. [*Laughter*] All right, what's your question? I'm sorry.

Q. How can you inspire children who want to follow a political career path to become the best they possibly can in the future and stuff like that?

The President. Are you interested?

Q. Yes.

The President. That's great. I'm proud of you for that.

Q. Thanks.

The President. My most important advice is worry more about what you want to do rather than what you want to be. And what do I mean by that? I think there are a lot of folks who get into politics and they say to themselves, I want to be a "blank." I want to be a Congressman, or I want to be a Senator, or I want to be a Governor, or I want to be a President. And so then their focus is on, I want to get that position. And that leads some young, ambitious people to say, well, I'll—it doesn't matter to me what I stand for, as long as I can get the position.

And you end up, maybe, if you're talented enough, getting the position, but along the way, you haven't really accomplished much. And if you do get in the position, you don't know why you're there or what you want to do with it.

And I think that politics and public service is an incredibly noble profession, but it's a hard life, as these folks will tell you. You're away from your family. You're under incredible scrutiny. People are criticizing you all the time. You miss birthday parties. You miss soccer games. You're on the road, you're at chicken dinners, and the chicken is not always great. [*Laughter*] You're not getting enough sleep. You're having to raise money.

So the only reason to do it is if you're getting something done. If you're helping somebody get health care or you're helping somebody get a job or you're making sure that our troops when they come home are treated with the dignity and respect that they deserve and are getting the benefits that they've earned, or if you're trying to clean up the environment.

So rather than think about, okay, I want that office, what I—my advice to you would be start serving. What are you passionate about? What do you care about? Do you care about some

kids in your neighborhood that maybe don't have the same opportunities because they're poor, and that really bugs you? Well, start mentoring those kids, and start volunteering at a Boys and Girls Club, and start getting your friends involved and organizing a fundraiser to build a new playground.

Are you interested in the environment, and you're worried about climate change? Well, you know what, get started now. Go find a group of like-minded people, and talk to your Members of Congress, and get educated about the issue, and start figuring out through social media how you can form a broader organization to advance the cause.

Here's the good news: If you take that approach, then even if you don't get to that office, you've done a world of good. And if you do get to that office, it will be earned, and you'll have a sense of what's important to you and what your moral compass is, so you'll be that much better as a Congressman or a mayor or a councilman or what have you.

So this is actually, by the way, pretty good advice generally, not just for public service. Because when I meet the—if you look at the most successful businesspeople, they are people who just love the thing they're doing. Steve Jobs loved computers. He loved design. He loved the Internet. So he's working on this stuff, and then it turns out you, get so absorbed in it, you end up being pretty good at it.

And then—so I always tell young people, don't wait until you get there to do something. You can do something right now.

All right, a young lady's turn.

Republican Economic Theory/Environmental Regulations/Racial Discrimination

Q. Hi.

The President. Hold on. Let's get a mike.

Q. Okay. I'm Lucy. I'm a student at Hocking. And I am wondering, that you've said that the Republicans, they've never really changed their opinion of what to do. It's always tax cuts, tax cuts. And why do you think that they're always proposing tax cuts and never changing what they think we should do? [*Laughter*]

The President. Well, look—[*laughter*]—no, it's a good question. Look—and I want to be fair to their philosophy—I think they have a particular philosophy, at least today. Now, keep in mind that every party changes over time. The person who I consider the greatest President of all time, a guy named Abraham Lincoln, was also the first Republican President. There have been Democrats whose main goal was to block civil rights, back in the forties and fifties and sixties. So I want to be clear that our country works best when both parties are evolving and changing. And over certain periods of time, Democrats have been stupid and the Republicans have had better ideas, and vice versa.

Right now, at least, the core Republican philosophy and belief is that the less government interferes with the marketplace, the better off we all are. Some believe that because just philosophically, they think government is a source of coercion and interference and telling you what to do. And they believe that everybody, as long as they're not hurting anybody, should be free to do exactly what they want.

Some of it has to do with an economic theory that says capitalism and the free market is great, and so government, when it meddles and gets involved in regulations, et cetera, is hurting economic growth. Some believe that, look, if I'm out there and I'm making a whole lot of money, it's my money, and I shouldn't have to pay taxes to pay for somebody else's school or somebody else's road or what have you. So there are a bunch of reasons why I think they have the philosophy that they've got.

I think the problem right now is that we live in such a complicated, big, global society that what might be a sensible theory on paper doesn't always make sense in real life. So you may generally think, as I do, that the market is the greatest source of productivity and job creation and wealth creation in history. But our history tells us that if there's a company that's out there making a lot of money, but also pouring a bunch of pollution into the water, and it's—catches on fire—[*laughter*]—and suddenly, people can't fish there anymore and people

are getting sick, that it makes sense for us to have some regulations that say, you know what, you can make your products, you can make a profit, that's great, but you're kind of messing things up, and so we're going to say you can't just dump your pollution in the water.

In theory, you might say, we don't want government forcing itself in the interactions of people. But if our history shows that racial minorities or a gay person is discriminated, we make a value judgment that says this is an exception. You can kind of do what you want, but when it comes to a hotel, you can't decide you're not going to serve somebody of a particular racial or ethnic group. You've got a business; you're not going to—we don't want you to discriminate. That's a principle that constrains your freedom, because we think that that is a value that we care about.

So that's—my philosophy is that you can have principles, but then, you have to apply them, and how are they working in the real world, and are they fair, and are they just, and are they generous and do they work? You have got to base some ideas on facts and our history. And I think sometimes, that's not what happens in Washington.

And you probably know somebody like that at school, who, it doesn't matter what happens, they keep on doing the same thing over and over again even though it doesn't work. [*Laughter*] And Einstein called that "madness." [*Laughter*]

Last question—I'm going to take two more questions. I'm going to make an exception. [*Laughter*] All right. So young people have gotten some good questions, so we're going to get not as young a guy. [*Laughter*] Here. Yes. Go ahead. I mean, he's still pretty young.

Campaign Finance Reform/Supreme Court Decision in Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission/Gerrymandering/Political Participation/Mandatory Voting

Q. Hi, Mr. President. Kim Ankaris. You speak about the dysfunction in Washington, partly because people are trying to be reelected every so often.

The President. Yes.

Q. What about *Citizens United* and overturning that and getting some limits on campaign spending so that we bring some reality back to this situation?

The President. Well, there's no doubt that among advanced democracies, we are unique in the length of our campaigns, the almost unlimited amounts of money that are now spent. And I think it's bad for our democracy.

And I speak as somebody who has raised a lot of money. I'm very good at it. I'm proud of the fact that part of the reason I was really good at it is because we were the first sort of out of the gate to—not the first, but we really refined using the Internet for small donations and to be able to pool a lot of ordinary folks' resources to amplify our message. But I also got checks from wealthy people too. So it's not that I'm not good at it, I just don't think it's a good way for our democracy to work.

I think, first of all, it makes life miserable on Members of Congress, those—particularly those in competitive districts. There is no doubt that it has an impact on how legislation moves forward or doesn't move forward in Congress. It's not straightforward, I'm writing the check and here's my position. But there's a reason why special interests and lobbyists have undue influence in Washington, and a lot of it has to do with the fundraising that they do. And the degree to which it's spent on TV and the nature of just the blitzkrieg. You guys here in Ohio, you just feel it, right? I mean, it's just—every election season, you just got to turn off the TV. It's depressing. And it's all negative because we know—the science has shown—that people are more prone to believe the negative than the positive. And it just degrades our democracy, generally.

Now, here's the problem. *Citizens United* was a Supreme Court ruling based on the First Amendment, so it can't be overturned by statute. It could be overturned by a new Court, or it could be overturned by a constitutional amendment. And those are extraordinarily challenging processes. So I think we have to think about, what are other creative ways to reduce the influence of money, given that in the

short term we not going to be able to overturn *Citizens United*?

And I think there are other ways for us to think creatively, and we've got to have a better debate about how we make this democracy and encourage participation—how we make our democracy better and encourage more participation.

For example, the process of political gerrymandering, I think, is damaging the Congress. I don't think the insiders should draw the lines and decide who their voters are. Because I think that it—[*applause*]—and Democrats and Republicans do this, and it's great for incumbents. But it means, over time, that people aren't competing for the center because they know that if they win a Democratic primary or a Republican primary, they've won. So they just—it pushes parties away from compromise in the center.

I think that—now, I don't think I've ever said this publicly, but I'm going to go ahead and say it now. We shouldn't be making it harder to vote, we should be making it easier to vote.

And what I haven't said—I've said that publicly before. [*Laughter*] So my Justice Department is going to be vigorous in terms of trying to enforce voting rights. I gave a speech down in Selma—at the 50th anniversary that was incredibly moving for me and my daughters—and the notion that this day and age we would be deliberately trying to restrict the franchise makes no sense. And at the State and local levels, that's—you can push back against that and make sure that we're expanding the franchise, not restricting it.

In Australia and some other countries, there's mandatory voting. It would be transformative if everybody voted. That would counteract money more than anything. If everybody voted, then it would completely change the political map in this country, because the people who tend not to vote are young; they're lower income; they're skewed more heavily towards immigrant groups and minority groups; and they're often the folks who are—they're scratching and climbing to get into the middle class. And they're working hard. There's a reason why some folks try to keep them away from the polls. We should want to get them into the polls. So that may end up being a better strategy in the short term.

Long term, I think it would be fun to have a constitutional amendment process about how our financial system works. But realistically, given the requirements of that process, that would be a long-term proposition.

All right, last question. It's a young lady's turn. So all the guys, you guys got to put your hands down. [*Laughter*] All right, this young lady. She's had her hand up quite a bit. Go ahead.

Recession of 2008–2009/Guantanamo Bay Detention Center

Q. Hello, Mr. President. My name is Laura Winfrey. No relation to Oprah, unfortunately. [*Laughter*] I am in seventh grade, and I attend school at Citizens Leadership Academy. My question is, if you could go back to the first day of your first term and the first day of your second term, what advice would you give yourself? [*Laughter*]

The President. That's a good question. I would have told myself to anticipate that because the recession was so bad and so tough for so many people, that I was going to have to be more aggressive in explaining to the public how long it was going to take for the recovery to take place.

Although I—this is a challenge that we had when we first came in. When FDR came in during the Great Depression, it had been so bad for 2, 3 years, that everybody understood, all right, we're kind of bottomed out, and so he could come in and then just propose, here's what we're going to do. And there was huge support because there had already been a track record of failure by the previous administration.

When we came in, things were crashing, but it hadn't yet shown up in the statistics. And it would take another 8, 9 months, even a year, before things really bottomed out. And I think people were nervous and they were scared, the stock market was plummeting, but people didn't know the depths of it, like how many

jobs we were losing per month and so forth. And I think I might have done a better job in preparing people so they kind of knew what was coming. And that would have helped explain why we needed to pass the Recovery Act or why we needed to invest in the auto industry. So I think we could have done a better job on that front than we did.

I think I would have closed Guantanamo on the first day. I didn't because at that time, as you all recall, we had a bipartisan agreement that it should be closed. The Republican—my Republican opponent had also said it should have been closed. And I thought that we had enough consensus there that we could do it in a more deliberate fashion. But the politics of it got tough, and people got scared by the rhetoric around it. And once that set in, then the path of least resistance was just to leave it open, even though it's not who we are as a country. It is used by terrorists around the world to help recruit jihadists. So instead, we've had to just chip away at it, year after year after year. But I think in that first couple of weeks, we could have done it quicker.

I was thinking maybe I should have told myself to start dying my hair now—[*laughter*]—before people noticed, because by the—a year in, it was too late. [*Laughter*] But that's—I'm just kidding. Michelle thinks I look distinguished. [*Laughter*]

Let me just say it has been wonderful to be with you. I'll leave you with this thought. As discouraging, sometimes, as the news is, and as certainly discouraging as the news out of Washington is sometimes, it really is important for us to understand how well positioned we are for the future.

I—we get White House interns in every 6 months: wonderful young people, really inspiring because they're so smart and clever and hard-working and idealistic. And I tell them, if there was a time in history where you would want to be born, and you were most likely to be healthy, have enough to eat, not be subject to violence, not be subject to discrimination, not be subject to sexual assault, not to be abused by your government, the time would actually be now. And that's hard to imagine as—with all the terrible things that are happening around the world. But we've made enormous strides. We've made enormous progress.

When I was at that bridge down in Selma, and you think about, Reverend Moss, where we were 50 years ago and where we are now, as challenging, as troubling as what has happened in Ferguson and in Cleveland and in New York around some of those issues, as much progress as we have nevertheless made, when you think about our economy and the fact that we have the best universities and the best workers and we still have the best scientific establishment and the most innovative companies, we've got all the cards. We really do.

I mean, life is tough, and America has got problems, and they're hard to solve, and they're rarely solved overnight. And progress has never been a straight line, it's always zigged and zagged. And sometimes, you go sideways, and sometimes, you even go backwards. But our trajectory is towards greater fairness and more inclusiveness and more tolerance and more prosperity.

And I want people to feel encouraged by that. Because the longer I'm in this office, actually, the more proud I am of all the incredible things the American people do every single day. And our biggest enemy, I think, is this corrosive cynicism that tells us we can't do things. We—there is nothing this country cannot do. There's nothing Cleveland cannot do, and that's because of you.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:46 p.m. at the Global Center for Health Innovation. In his remarks, he referred to Connie Schultz, wife of Sen. Sherrod C. Brown; Don Moulthrop, chief executive officer, City Club of Cleveland; Otis Moss III, pastor, Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago, IL; Reps. Peter A. Sessions and Martha Roby; Sen. Michael S. Lee; 2012 Republican Presidential nominee W. Mitt Romney; former Sen. Richard J. Santorum; Sen. Randal H. Paul; and Sen. John S. McCain III, in his capacity as the 2008 Republican Presidential nominee.

Memorandum on Delegation of Authority Under the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015
March 18, 2015

Memorandum for the Secretary of State

Subject: Delegation of Authority Under the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, I hereby order as follows:

I hereby delegate to the Secretary of State the authority to prepare and submit to the Congress the report required by section 1244(c) of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015 (Public Law 113–291) (the "Act").

Any reference in this memorandum to the Act shall be deemed to be a reference to any future act that is the same or substantially the same as such provision.

You are authorized and directed to publish this memorandum in the *Federal Register*.

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: This memorandum was not received for publication in the *Federal Register*. An original was not available for verification of the content of this memorandum.

Remarks Prior to a Roundtable Discussion on Renewable Energy and Climate Change and an Exchange With Reporters at the Department of Energy
March 19, 2015

The President. Well, it is wonderful to be here at the Department of Energy with some of our outstanding private sector partners. Secretary Ernie Moniz is in Geneva doing some important work on behalf of our national security, but I want to thank him and his team at the Department of Energy, as well as our folks over at EPA. And Secretary—or Administrator Gina McCarthy is here, as well as Christy Goldfuss at the Council on Environmental Quality.

This has been a team effort to make sure that we are doing everything we can to boost the energy efficiency of the American economy. And since we've said it's important, we thought it was important for us to lead by example here at the Federal Government. As you know, I just took a tour of the solar-powered roof upstairs. And those panels are not just for show, they produce power that the Government doesn't then have to buy off the grid. And more and more businesses and more and more homeowners are following suit not because it's simply good for the environment, but because it's good for their bottom lines.

Thanks in part to the investments that we've made over the past 6 years, the United States is rapidly becoming a leader in solar energy. Last year was the biggest year for solar power in our history. And in fact, the solar industry is adding jobs 10 times faster than the economy as a whole.

So we're proving that it is possible to grow our economy robustly, while at the same time, doing the right thing for our environment and tackling climate change in a serious way.

Over the past 6 years, we've done more than ever to combat climate change. Last year, the Federal Government used less energy than at any time in the past four decades. And in a historic joint announcement that many of you saw, China committed to limiting their emissions for the first time.

So today America once again is going to be leading by example. This morning I signed an Executive order that will do two things. First, we're going to cut the Federal Government's greenhouse gas emissions 40 percent from the 2008 levels within the next 10 years. Second, we're going to increase the share of electricity that the Federal Government uses from renewable sources to 30 percent within the next

10 years. These are ambitious goals, but we know that they're achievable goals.

And I want to thank the executives of some of our leading companies in the country who are here, because they're stepping up and making similar commitments. Folks from IBM to GE, Northrop Grumman, some of our biggest Fortune 100 companies are setting their own ambitious goals. And cumulatively, what this is doing is allowing us across the economy to not only hit some key targets that are going to be required in order for us to reduce climate change, but they're also saving money, helping their bottom line, and they're giving a boost to the industry as a whole. Because as we get economies of scale and demand for solar and wind and other renewable energies grows, obviously, that can help drive down the overall price, make it that much for efficient, and we start getting a virtuous cycle that is good for the environment and creates jobs here in America.

So we very much want to thank our private sector partners. You guys have done an outstanding job. And because of the prominence of many of the companies here and the fact that they've got a whole bunch of suppliers up and down the chain, what you do with respect to energy efficiency is going to have a ripple effect throughout the economy. And we're very pleased with that.

So thank you very much. Thanks, everybody. Thank you, guys.

Iran

Q. Have you spoken to Prime Minister Netanyahu—[*inaudible*]?

The President. Thanks, everybody.

Q. ——the Iran talks—[*inaudible*]?

The President. Thank you, guys. I'm sorry, we were talking about energy, and it's a great story. [*Laughter*] So, hopefully, you'll focus on it. Thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:28 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Christy Goldfuss, Managing Director, Council on Environmental Quality. He also referred to Executive Order 13693, which is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume. A reporter referred to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel.

Videotaped Remarks on the Observance of Nowruz
March 19, 2015

Hello. To everyone celebrating Nowruz, across the United States and in countries around the world: *Nowruz Mubarak.*

For thousands of years, this has been a time to gather with family and friends and welcome a new spring and a new year. Last week, my wife Michelle helped mark Nowruz here at the White House. It was a celebration of the vibrant cultures, food, music, and friendship of our many diaspora communities who make extraordinary contributions every day here in the United States. We even created our own *Haft Seen*, representing our hopes for the new year.

This year, that includes our hopes for progress between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the international community, including the United States. So I want to take this opportunity once again to speak directly to the people and leaders of Iran. As you gather around the Nowruz table—from Tehran to Shiraz to Tabriz, from the coasts of the Caspian Sea to the Persian Gulf—you're giving thanks for your blessings and looking ahead to the future.

This year, we have the best opportunity in decades to pursue a different future between our countries. Just over a year ago, we reached an initial understanding regarding Iran's nuclear program. And both sides have kept our commitments. Iran has halted progress on its nuclear program and even rolled it back in some areas. The international community, including the United States, has provided Iran with some relief from sanctions. Now our diplomats—and our scientists—are engaged in negotiations in the hopes of finding a comprehensive solution that resolves the world's concerns with Iran's nuclear program.

The days and weeks ahead will be critical. Our negotiations have made progress, but gaps remain. And there are people, in both our countries and beyond, who oppose a diplomatic resolution. My message to you, the people of Iran, is that, together, we have to speak up for the future we seek.

As I have said many times before, I believe that our countries should be able to resolve this issue peacefully, with diplomacy. Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei has issued a fatwa against the development of nuclear weapons, and President Rouhani has said that Iran would never develop a nuclear weapon. Together with the international community, the United States has said that Iran should have access to peaceful nuclear energy, consistent with Iran's international obligations. So there is a way for Iran—if it is willing to take meaningful, verifiable steps—to assure the world that its nuclear program is, in fact, for peaceful purposes only.

In this sense, Iran's leaders have a choice between two paths. If they cannot agree to a reasonable deal, they will keep Iran on the path it's on today, a path that has isolated Iran and the Iranian people from so much of the world, caused so much hardship for Iranian families, and deprived so many young Iranians the jobs and opportunities they deserve.

On the other hand, if Iran's leaders can agree to a reasonable deal, it can lead to a better path, the path of greater opportunities for the Iranian people: more trade and ties with the world; more foreign investment and jobs, including for young Iranians; more cultural exchanges and chances for Iranian students to travel abroad; more partnerships in areas like science and technology and innovation. In other words, a nuclear deal now can help open the door to a brighter future for you, the Iranian people, who, as heirs to a great civilization, have so much to give the world.

This is what's at stake today. And this moment may not come again soon. I believe that our nations have an historic opportunity to resolve this issue peacefully, an opportunity we should not miss. As the poet Hafez wrote: "It is early spring. Try to be joyful in your heart. For many a flower will bloom while you will be in clay."

For decades, our nations have been separated by mistrust and fear. Now it is early spring. We have a chance—a chance—to make progress that will benefit our countries and the world for many years to come. Now it is up to all of us, Iranians and Americans, to seize this moment and the possibilities that can bloom in this new season.

Thank you, and *Nowruzetan Pirooz.*

NOTE: The remarks were recorded at approximately 1:20 p.m. on March 12 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast on March 19. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Persian language transcript of these remarks.

Memorandum on Establishing the Director of White House Information Technology and the Executive Committee for Presidential Information Technology

March 19, 2015

Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of Homeland Security, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, the National Security Advisor, and the Director of the Office of Administration

Subject: Establishing the Director of White House Information Technology and the Executive Committee for Presidential Information Technology

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, and in order to improve the information resources and information systems provided to the President, Vice President, and

Executive Office of the President (EOP), I hereby direct the following:

Section 1. Policy. The purposes of this memorandum are to ensure that the information resources and information systems provided to the President, Vice President, and EOP are efficient, secure, and resilient; establish a model for Government information technology management efforts; reduce operating costs through the elimination of duplication and overlapping services; and accomplish the goal of converging disparate information resources and information systems for the EOP.

This memorandum is intended to maintain the President's exclusive control of the information resources and information systems provided to the President, Vice President, and EOP. High-quality, efficient, interoperable, and safe information systems and information resources are required in order for the President to discharge the duties of his office with the support of those who advise and assist him, and with the additional assistance of all EOP components. The responsibilities that this memorandum vests in the Director of White House Information Technology, as described below, have been performed historically within the EOP, and it is the intent of this memorandum to continue this practice.

The Director of White House Information Technology, on behalf of the President, shall have the primary authority to establish and coordinate the necessary policies and procedures for operating and maintaining the information resources and information systems provided to the President, Vice President, and EOP. Nothing in this memorandum may be construed to delegate the ownership, or any rights associated with ownership, of any information resources or information systems, nor of any record, to any entity outside of the EOP.

Sec. 2. Director of White House Information Technology. (a) There is hereby established the Director of White House Information Technology (Director). The Director shall be the senior officer responsible for the information resources and information systems provided to the President, Vice President, and EOP by the Presidential Information Technology Community (Community). The Director shall:

(i) be designated by the President;
(ii) have the rank and status of a commissioned officer in the White House Office; and
(iii) have sufficient seniority, education, training, and expertise to provide the necessary advice, coordination, and guidance to the Community.

(b) The Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations shall provide the Director with necessary direction and supervision.

(c) The Director shall ensure the effective use of information resources and information systems provided to the President, Vice President, and EOP in order to improve mission performance, and shall have the appropriate authority to promulgate all necessary procedures and rules governing these resources and systems. The Director shall provide policy coordination and guidance for, and periodically review, all activities relating to the information resources and information systems provided to the President, Vice President, and EOP by the Community, including expenditures for, and procurement of, information resources and information systems by the Community. Such activities shall be subject to the Director's coordination, guidance, and review in order to ensure consistency with the Director's strategy and to strengthen the quality of the Community's decisions through integrated analysis, planning, budgeting, and evaluation processes.

(d) The Director may advise and confer with appropriate executive departments and agencies, individuals, and other entities as necessary to perform the Director's duties under this memorandum.

Sec. 3. Executive Committee for Presidential Information Technology. There is hereby established an Executive Committee for Presidential Information Technology (Committee). The Committee consists of the following officials or their designees: the Assistant to the President for Management and Administration; the Executive Secretary of the National Security Council; the Director of the Office of

Administration; the Director of the United States Secret Service; and the Director of the White House Military Office.

Sec. 4. Administration. (a) The President or the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations may assign the Director and the Committee any additional functions necessary to advance the mission set forth in this memorandum.

(b) The Committee shall advise and make policy recommendations to the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations and the Director with respect to operational and procurement decisions necessary to achieve secure, seamless, reliable, and integrated information resources and information systems for the President, Vice President, and EOP. The Director shall update the Committee on both strategy and execution, as requested, including collaboration efforts with the Federal Chief Information Officer, with other government agencies, and by participating in the Chief Information Officers Council.

(c) The Secretary of Defense shall designate or appoint a White House Technology Liaison for the White House Communications Agency and the Secretary of Homeland Security shall designate or appoint a White House Technology Liaison for the United States Secret Service. Any entity that becomes a part of the Community after the issuance of this memorandum shall designate or appoint a White House Technology Liaison for that entity. The designation or appointment of a White House Technology Liaison is subject to the review of, and shall be made in consultation with, the President or his designee. The Chief Information Officer of the Office of Administration and the Chief Information Officer of the National Security Council, and their successors in function, are designated as White House Technology Liaisons for their respective components. In coordination with the Director, the White House Technology Liaisons shall ensure that the day-to-day operation of and long-term strategy for information resources and information systems provided to the President, Vice President, and EOP are interoperable and effectively function as a single, modern, and high-quality enterprise that reduces duplication, inefficiency, and waste.

(d) The President or his designee shall retain the authority to specify the application of operating policies and procedures, including security measures, which are used in the construction, operation, and maintenance of any information resources or information system provided to the President, Vice President, and EOP.

(e) Presidential Information Technology Community entities shall:

(i) assist and provide information to the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations and the Director, consistent with applicable law, as may be necessary to implement this memorandum; and

(ii) as soon as practicable after the issuance of this memorandum, enter into any memoranda of understanding as necessary to give effect to the provisions of this memorandum.

(f) As soon as practicable after the issuance of this memorandum, EOP components shall take all necessary steps, either individually or collectively, to ensure the proper creation, storage, and transmission of EOP information on any information systems and information resources provided to the President, Vice President, and EOP.

Sec. 5. Definitions. As used in this memorandum:

(a) "Information resources," "information systems," and "information technology" have the meanings assigned by section 3502 of title 44, United States Code.

(b) "Presidential Information Technology Community" means the entities that provide information resources and information systems to the President, Vice President, and EOP, including:

(i) the National Security Council;

(ii) the Office of Administration;

(iii) the United States Secret Service;

(iv) the White House Military Office; and

(v) the White House Communications Agency.

(c) "Executive Office of the President" means:

(i) each component of the EOP as is or may hereafter be established;
(ii) any successor in function to an EOP component that has been abolished and of which the function is retained in the EOP; and
(iii) the President's Commission on White House Fellowships, the President's Intelligence Advisory Board, the Residence of the Vice President, and such other entities as the President from time to time may determine.

Sec. 6. General Provisions. (a) Nothing in this memorandum shall be construed to impair or otherwise affect:

(i) the authority granted by law to an executive department, agency, entity, office, or the head thereof; or

(ii) the functions of the Director of the Office of Management and Budget relating to budgetary, administrative, or legislative proposals.

(b) This memorandum shall be implemented consistent with applicable law and appropriate protections for privacy and civil liberties, and subject to the availability of appropriations.

(c) This memorandum is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by any party against the United States, its departments, agencies, or entities, its officers, employees, or agents, or any other person.

BARACK OBAMA

Remarks at the White House Student Film Festival
March 20, 2015

The President. Hello! Thank you so much, everybody! Have a seat. Well, hello, everybody, and welcome to the second annual White House Film Festival. It's like the Sundance or Cannes of film festivals that are open to the public through a Government website. [*Laughter*] It may also be the only film festival where one of the entrants has his tooth loose. [*Laughter*] And is—may pull it out right here at the ceremony. [*Laughter*] Everybody looks wonderful, of course. You'll be disappointed to know I will not be doing a musical number based on this year's films.

Audience members. Aww.

The President. That's the job of your emcees, Kal Penn and Terrence J. Give them a big round of applause. I don't know if they'll be doing musical numbers either. [*Laughter*] But I do want to thank the folks at the American Film Institute and Participant Media for partnering with us on this event. Thank you very much. Give them a big round of applause.

I want to give a shout out to all the honorees' dates tonight, which I assume are either parents or teachers or somebody who's supported these outstanding young people every step of the way. And of course, most importantly, let's give it up to our outstanding young filmmakers! [*Applause*] Yay! Yay!

So I love this event. This is the second year that we've hosted the White House Student Film Festival, and it's a great example of what happens when we just unleash the skills and the imagination of America's young people. In this country, if we give all of our kids the best opportunities and technology and resources, there's no telling what they'll create, now and the years ahead.

This year, we received more than 1,500 submissions that came from all across the country, actually, even came as far as Azerbaijan. Our theme was "The Impact of Giving Back." And today we are proud to honor our 15 official selections, because these aren't just great films, but they're great examples of how young people are making a difference all over the country.

Today we're celebrating a 6-year-old in Montana. [*Applause*] Is that you? He's the guy without—he's missing teeth and—[*laughter*].

But he's also challenging us to see conservation through a child's eyes.

We're honoring a young man's story of service to his family and our environment in his Navajo Nation, Navajo tradition; a teenager who started a wheelchair challenge and raised tens of thousands of dollars to make his school more accessible to folks with disabilities; a third-grade superhero who wears a cape as he delivers clothes and food to the homeless. You see, even in indie film festivals, superhero movies are infiltrating. [*Laughter*] I'm going to have to see "Super Ewan 2" next summer. [*Laughter*] There's going to be a sequel.

And then there are two young women, Allyson Edwards and Madison Jaco, who adopted a highway to clean up the roads in their hometown of Hawkins, Texas. Where are these young ladies? Raise your hands. A little higher. There you go. So they decided they wanted to make an even bigger impact, so they reached out to young people all across the globe—and this is part of the power of the Internet—and now you've got groups in India, France, Nigeria, Benin, Argentina, all getting into the act—cleaning up their schools and beaches and roads—just because of these two young women.

And as Allyson and Madison say in their film, "In today's society, we're often told how much we are different and how much divides us, but through our shared community service, we realized how much brings us together." That's a profound statement, guys. [*Laughter*] I don't think I was that smart when I was your age.

But that's the idea that lies at the heart of service: empathy, understanding, being able to make a connection. And as these young people are showing us, it's a message that can be told powerfully through film, because that's a media that connects us with people and stories we might otherwise never know. And it puts us in the shoes of people on—potentially on the other side of the world or a neighborhood very different than the one we grew up in. And that's true whether you're a middle schooler with a GoPro or a Hollywood director on a custom-made soundstage.

Now, we know that if today's middle schoolers are going to become those big-time directors—and we've got some big-time folks here. I mean, is Steve McQueen here? Has filmed "12 Years a Slave." It was a big Oscar winner last year and a profound film. And we appreciate his presence here today. So you guys could get some tips. [*Laughter*]

But the next Steve McQueen or Scorsese or Spielberg or documentarian like Ken Burns—if we're going to make sure that these young people have those opportunities, then we've got to do our part to support them.

That means we've got to give them a world-class education, access to science and technology and engineering and math, as well as the arts. It means that they've got to have access to the technology they need to learn and explore and grow.

It's not optional to have access to that technology in today's world. That's one of the reasons I launched the ConnectED initiative: to connect 99 percent of our students to next-generation broadband and wireless. Because when we expect free WiFi with our coffee, then we should at least have it in our schools and our libraries too.

And the good news is, we're making great progress. More than 1,800 school districts have pledged to bring high-speed broadband and digital learning to their students. Companies have committed billions of dollars in free technology for schools and libraries around the country. And it's making a difference. Students in rural Alabama used software donated by Adobe to make a music video that won first place in a contest and then earned their school $10,000 of new musical equipment. So we know this can make a difference.

But we also know that it takes more than technology to help our kids thrive: parents, teachers, people who love and inspire them, coaches, mentors to help guide their way. So today, as part of our "United We Serve" effort, I'm proud to announce that AFI and the Screen Actors Guild–American Federation of Television and Radio Artists are pairing up to give each of the young filmmakers here a

mentor who can bring out the best of them in the months ahead. Now, that's pretty cool. [*Applause*] What do you think? Right?

And the organizations are also reaching beyond these young people. They're going to pledge a million hours of educational and mentoring programs for young people across the country over the next 3 years, which is a remarkable commitment, so we want to thank AFI and SAG–AFTRA for that wonderful contribution.

We've seen how impactful these mentoring experiences can be. I'll just take a minute to give you one example, the story of a young woman who we honored here last year named Shelly Ortiz. And Shelly made this wonderful video—is Shelly here?

Student filmmaker Shelly Ortiz. Yes!

The President. There you are. There's Shelly. Good to see you. So I'm going to brag about you for a second.

So Shelly made a great video about how technology in her classroom helped fuel her passion for filmmaking. But when Shelly came to the White House, she was still working on another project that meant a lot to her, which was a short documentary about how her father was abandoned by his mom as a child and all the ramifications, what that meant.

After the festival, AFI connected her with an accomplished documentarian, who served as her mentor, in giving Shelly detailed notes and the confidence to take risks as a director. A few months later, Shelly's documentary was featured at AFI's International Documentary Festival. Pretty cool. And today, she says that the mentoring she received and the technology she's been given didn't just help her become a better filmmaker, it helped her become closer than ever with her dad.

So that's the power of what is being done here. Experiences like these aren't just about a young person's future career. They're about helping them to connect in new and meaningful ways, whether it's somebody as close as your parents or somebody on an iPad halfway around the world who may share more in common with you than you think.

And we don't know what these new connections will produce down the road, but if these movies are any indication, I know that these young people are going to make an even bigger impact for their communities and their country in the years ahead.

So I'm proud of you. Keep up the great work. I can't stay to watch them all, but I'm going to get them all digitally. And I'm going to give them big thumbs-up. All right. Thank you. I'm really proud of you guys. Now it's time to begin our feature presentations. So see you guys!

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:36 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Noah Gue, student, Meadowlark Elementary School in Bozeman, MT; actors Kal Penn and Terrence Jenkins; Keanu B. Jones, student, Flagstaff Arts and Leadership Academy in Flagstaff, AZ; Archer Hadley, student, Austin High School in Austin, TX; Ewan Drum, student, New Haven Elementary School in New Haven, MI; and Shelly Ortiz, student, Metropolitan Arts Institute in Phoenix, AZ, and her father Epi Ortiz.

Statement on United States Citizens Detained or Missing in Iran
March 20, 2015

The spirit of family is deeply woven into all of the rich cultural traditions of the Nowruz holiday. It is a time for reuniting and rejoicing with loved ones and sharing hopes for the new year. Today, as families across the world gather to mark this holiday, we remember those American families who are enduring painful separations from their loved ones who are imprisoned or went missing in Iran.

Saeed Abedini of Boise, Idaho, has spent 2½ years detained in Iran on charges related to his religious beliefs. He must be returned to his wife and two young children, who needlessly continue to grow up without their father.

Amir Hekmati of Flint, Michigan, has been imprisoned in Iran on false espionage charges for over 3½ years. His family, including his father who is gravely ill, has borne the pain of Amir's absence for far too long.

Jason Rezaian of Marin County, California, an Iranian Government–credentialed reporter for the Washington Post, has been unjustly held in Iran for nearly 8 months on vague charges. It is especially painful that on a holiday centered on ridding one's self of the difficulties of the past year, Jason's mother and family will continue to carry the heavy burden of concern regarding Jason's health and well-being into the new year.

And finally, we recently marked yet another anniversary since Robert Levinson went missing on Kish Island. His family has now endured the hardship of his disappearance for over 8 years.

At this time of renewal, compassion, and understanding, I reiterate my commitment to bringing our citizens home and call on the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to immediately release Saeed Abedini, Amir Hekmati, and Jason Rezaian and to work cooperatively with us to find Robert Levinson so that they all can be safely reunited with their families as soon as possible.

In honor of the familial spirit so strongly enshrined within this holiday and for the Abedini, Hekmati, Rezaian, and Levinson families, I hope this new spring is filled with joyous moments for us all with all of our loved ones by our sides.

NOTE: The statement referred to Naghmeh Abedini, wife of Saeed Abedini, and their children Jacob and Rebekka; Ali Hekmati, father of Amir M. Hekmati; and Mary Rezaian, mother of Jason Rezaian.

Statement on the Death of Lucy Coffey
March 20, 2015

In 1943, a supermarket worker in Dallas named Lucy Coffey left behind her home and her job to answer her country's call. In her 2 years with the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps, Sergeant Coffey served throughout the Pacific theater with distinction, earning two Bronze Stars. After the war, Sergeant Coffey continued to serve her country as an Army civilian, and the example set by her and her fellow WACs has inspired generations of patriots since.

When Vice President Biden and I had the honor of meeting Sergeant Coffey at the White House last year, she was America's oldest living woman veteran, and it was clear that the passage of time never dampened her patriotic love of country or her pioneering spirit. As we remember her life and salute her service, our thoughts and prayers are with her family, friends, and loved ones today.

Message to the Congress Transmitting the District of Columbia's Fiscal Year 2015 Budget Request
March 20, 2015

To the Congress of the United States:

Pursuant to my constitutional authority and as contemplated by section 446 of the District of Columbia Self-Government and Governmental Reorganization Act as amended in 1989, I am transmitting the District of Columbia's fiscal year (FY) 2015 Budget and Financial Plan. This transmittal does not represent an endorsement of the contents of the D.C. government's requests.

The proposed FY 2015 Budget and Financial Plan reflects the major programmatic objectives of the Mayor and the Council of the District of Columbia. For FY 2015, the District estimates total revenues and expenditures of $12.6 billion.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
March 20, 2015.

The President's Weekly Address
March 21, 2015

Hi, everybody. One of the most important positions in the President's Cabinet—and to our national security, our law enforcement, and our criminal justice system—is the Attorney General.

It's been more than 4 months since I nominated Loretta Lynch to serve as the next Attorney General of the United States. For 30 years, Loretta has distinguished herself as a tough, fair, and independent attorney. As the U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of New York, she successfully prosecuted the terrorists who plotted to bomb the Federal Reserve Bank and the New York City subway. She helped secure billions in settlements for people wronged by some of the world's biggest banks. She's been dogged in her pursuit of public corruption. She's jailed some of New York's most violent and notorious mobsters and gang members. And through it all, she's worked closely with law enforcement and local communities to get the job done.

In short, her qualifications are superb. That's why, in the past, the Senate easily confirmed Loretta to lead one of the most prominent U.S. attorney offices in the country, not once, but twice.

Still, it has been more than 4 months since I nominated Loretta Lynch to serve as Attorney General. And this time, Republican leaders in Congress won't even let her nomination come up for a vote. In fact, by Monday, Loretta will have been languishing on the Senate floor for longer than the seven previous Attorney Generals combined. Let me say that again: She will have been waiting for a simple yes-or-no vote on the Senate floor for longer than the seven previous Attorneys General combined.

No one can claim she's unqualified. No one's saying she can't do the job. Senators from both parties say they support her. This is purely about politics. First, Republicans held up her nomination because they were upset about the actions I took to make our broken immigration system smarter and fairer. Now they're denying her a vote until they can figure out how to pass a bill on a completely unrelated issue. But they could bring her up for a yes-or-no vote at any time.

Republicans promised that Congress would function smoothly with them in charge. Here's a small chance for them to prove it. Congress should stop playing politics with law enforcement and national security. They should support good people in both parties who want to reform our criminal justice system. And that means they should end the longest confirmation process for an Attorney General in three decades and give Loretta Lynch a vote.

Thanks, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 4:45 p.m. on March 20 in the Map Room at the White House for broadcast on March 21. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 20, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on March 21.

Statement on the Fifth Anniversary of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act
March 22, 2015

On the 5-year anniversary of the Affordable Care Act, one thing couldn't be clearer: This law is working, and in many ways, it's working even better than anticipated.

After 5 years of the Affordable Care Act, more than 16 million uninsured Americans have gained the security of health insurance, an achievement that has cut the ranks of the uninsured by nearly one-third. These aren't just numbers. Because of this law, there are parents who can finally afford to take their kids to the doctor. There are families who no longer

risk losing their home or savings just because someone gets sick. There are young people free to pursue their dreams and start their own business without worrying about losing access to health care. There are Americans who, without this law, would not be alive today.

For Americans who already had insurance before this law was passed, the Affordable Care Act has meant new savings and new protections. Today, tens of millions of Americans with preexisting conditions are no longer at risk of being denied coverage. Women no longer have to worry about being charged more just for being women. Millions of young people have been able to stay on their parents' plan until they turn 26. More than 9 million seniors and people with disabilities have saved an average of $1,600 per person on their prescription medicine, over $15 billion in all since the Affordable Care Act became law. More than 70 million Americans have gained access to preventive care, including contraceptive services, with no additional out-of-pocket costs. And the law has helped improve the quality of health care: It's a major reason we saw 50,000 fewer preventable patient deaths in hospitals over the last 3 years of data.

The cynics said this law would kill jobs and cripple our economy. Despite the fact that our businesses have created nearly 12 million new jobs since this law was passed, some still insist it's a threat. But a growing body of evidence—actual facts—shows that the Affordable Care Act is good for our economy. In stark contrast to predictions that this law would cause premiums to skyrocket, last year, the growth in health care premium costs for businesses matched its lowest level on record. If premiums had kept growing over the last 4 years at the rate they had in the last decade, the average family premium would be $1,800 higher than it is today. That's $1,800 that stays in your pocket or doesn't come out of your paycheck. And in part because health care prices have grown at their slowest rate in nearly 50 years since this law was passed, we've been able to cut our deficits by two-thirds. Health care costs that have long been the biggest factor driving our projected long-term up deficits up are now the single biggest factor driving those deficits down.

The Affordable Care Act has been the subject of more scrutiny, more rumor, more attempts to dismantle and undermine it than just about any law in recent history. But 5 years later, it is succeeding. In fact, it's working better than even many of its supporters expected. It's time to embrace reality. Instead of trying yet again to repeal the Affordable Care Act and allowing special interests to write their own rules, we should work together to keep improving our health care system for everybody. Instead of kicking millions off their insurance and doubling the number of uninsured Americans, as the House Republican budget would do, we should work together to make sure every American has a chance to get covered.

Five years ago, we declared that in America, quality, affordable health care is not a privilege, it is a right. And I'll never stop working to protect that right for those who already have it and extend it to those who don't so that all of us can experience the blessings of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness in this country we love.

Statement on the Death of Former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore

March 22, 2015

I was deeply saddened to learn of the death of Singapore's Minister Mentor, Lee Kuan Yew. On behalf of the American people, Michelle and I offer our deepest condolences to the Lee family and join the people of Singapore in mourning the loss of this remarkable man. A visionary who led his country from Singapore's independence in 1965 to build one of the most prosperous countries in the world today, he was a devoted public servant and a remarkable

leader. Minister Mentor Lee's views and insights on Asian dynamics and economic management were respected by many around the world, and no small number of this and past generations of world leaders have sought his advice on governance and development. I personally appreciated his wisdom, including our discussions during my trip to Singapore in 2009, which were hugely important in helping me formulate our policy of rebalancing to the Asia-Pacific. He was a true giant of history who will be remembered for generations to come as the father of modern Singapore and as one the great strategists of Asian affairs.

Remarks at the White House Science Fair
March 23, 2015

The President. Hello, everybody! Hello, hello! Thank you. Everybody, have a seat. Thank you. Hello, scientists. [*Laughter*]

Science Fair participants. Hello!

The President. So this is—got to be the most fun event of the year. [*Laughter*] At least in the top three. And before I go any further, though, I need to lay down some rules. We had to put these in place based on the previous science fairs. First of all, no taking your robots or electric go-carts for a spin on the South Lawn. [*Laughter*] You can't do that. Rule number two, if you're going to explode something, you have to warn us first. [*Laughter*] Actually, don't—just don't explode anything. [*Laughter*] Number three, no using a marshmallow air cannon in the house—[*laughter*]—unless you let me shoot it first. [*Laughter*]

This is our fifth White House Science Fair. And every year, I walk out smarter than I walked in, because these young people have something to teach all of us, not just about batteries or attacking cancer cells or how to build a working robot or a rocket. I will say, though, the robots I see keep getting smarter every year. We are keeping an eye on that, by the way. [*Laughter*] You're on notice, Skynet.

But these young scientists and engineers teach us something beyond the specific topics that they're exploring. They teach us how to question assumptions, to wonder why something is the way it is and how we can make it better. And they remind us that there's always something more to learn and to try and to discover and to imagine, and that it's never too early or too late to create or discover something new.

That's why we love science. It's more than a school subject or the periodic table or the properties of waves. It is an approach to the world, a critical way to understand and explore and engage with the world, and then have the capacity to change that world and to share this accumulated knowledge. It's a mindset that says we that can use reason and logic and honest inquiry to reach new conclusions and solve big problems. And that's what we are celebrating here today with these amazing young people.

Now, first of all, I'm going to announce the people who are not that young, although some of them are youngish. We're joined by some of America's top scientists and engineers, starting with my Science Adviser, John Holdren. [*Applause*] Yay, John. The Director of the National Institutes of Health, Francis Collins, is here. The head of our Patent and Trademark Office—so, young people, if you've got something fancy, talk to Michelle Lee right here. She's ready to sign you up. The Acting Director of the U.S. Geological Survey, Suzette Kimball, is here. And somebody who has one of the coolest jobs in town, the head of NASA, Charles Bolden, is here. Where's Charlie? If there are any aspiring astronauts here, he's the man to impress. [*Laughter*] He's been in space himself.

We also have some outstanding guests who are here who have been participating in this on an ongoing basis. Bill Nye, the Science Guy, is here. Signature bow tie. So is Rush Holt, who's one of the few scientists to serve in Congress. We could probably use some more. There you go. Rush is now the head of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. And

just so you knew that athletes think science is cool too, we've got Victor Cruz of the New York Giants here. He is a big fan of science. And he has to be. As an all-pro wide receiver, he's got to figure out trajectories and angles and velocities and the physics of doing the salsa. [*Laughter*] For those of you who don't know, he does a salsa every time he gets a touchdown, and he gets a lot of them. [*Laughter*]

Now, Victor has been here before to celebrate the New York Giants winning the Super Bowl. But as I've said many times before, we've got to celebrate the winners of our science fairs as much as we celebrate the winners of football or basketball or other athletic competitions, because young scientists, mathematicians, engineers, they're critical to our future. You guys are the ones who are going to define the contours of the 21st century.

And I just had a chance to meet some of these young people. And I fired a lot of questions at them, and they know their stuff. It is unbelievable what so many of these young people have accomplished at such an early age. And I wish I could talk about every single one of them because all of them were extraordinarily impressive. But I want to leave enough time for everybody else to explore some of their exhibits. John Holdren probably wants me to get some of their résumés—[*laughter*]—in case we're hiring. But let me just mention a few of the young people that I had a chance to talk to, to give you a sense of the scope and depth and quality of the work that they're doing.

So, first of all, we've got Sophia Sánchez-Maes, who's here from Las Cruces, New Mexico. Where's Sophia? I just talked to her. Did she get in? [*Laughter*] There she is, right there. The—Sophia is a senior in high school, and she is crazy about algae. [*Laughter*] Now, to the non–science buffs here, you might say, what's so great about algae? But Sophia knows that algae is fascinating, especially as a potential fuel source.

So scientists are already working to turn algae into fuel. One of the hurdles is to make the process more efficient so less energy gets wasted along the way. Sophia saw that was a challenge. She asked why. She has created a more efficient method. She's identified optimal algae to use in her method, and she's helping to bring the world closer to using algae as a clean, renewable, and even inexhaustible energy source. And it's already being tested in her hometown, the process that she's developing. It is amazing. So let's give Sophia a big round of applause.

Harry Paul is here from Port Washington, New York. Where's Harry? There's Harry, right here. So Harry graduated and is now in his first year at Tufts. But listen to this story, because I think it gives you a sense of the quality of the young people we've got here. Harry was born with a condition called congenital scoliosis, a curvature of the spine. So growing up, Harry endured more than a dozen operations. Rather than feel sorry for himself, he thought, there's got to be a better way of doing this. So he designed a new type of spinal implant.

Starting in his freshman year in high school, he started researching the processes that he himself had gone through—his doctor was an expert on this—and he decided, let's see if I can come up with something better, an implant that can grow along with the growing child so it doesn't have to be constantly replaced or adjusted, which means you don't need as many intrusive operations. And Harry's implant could reduce the number of surgeries that a child may need for more than a dozen to as few as five, which obviously would cut down medical costs, but more importantly, would save a lot of young people pain and time out from school and recovery time and the potential complications of an operation.

Unbelievable stuff. Give Harry a big round of applause.

So Nikhil Behari is here from Pennsylvania. Where's Nikhil. There's Nikhil. He is a freshman—right?—in high school, interested in how we can better protect ourselves against hackers and data thieves online. So scientists are already using biometrics to prove that each of us walk in our own distinct ways. And Nikhil wondered, what if we each type in a distinctive ways? So he collected all kinds of data about

how a person types—their speed, how often they pause, how much pressure they use—built a special keyboard to test it. And he proved that his hypothesis was correct: that even if somebody knows your password, they don't necessarily punch it in exactly the way you do.

And he asked why, and made discoveries that now could help keep our online accounts more secure. So in the future, if keystroke-based authentication keeps your siblings from breaking into your Facebook account—[*laughter*]—or your Instagram account, you will know who to thank. [*Laughter*] It will be Nikhil. [*Laughter*] Congratulations.

So those three are just samples of the extraordinary scientists that we've already—and engineers—that we've already got here.

I should give special mention to our Girl Scouts from Oklahoma. Where are those Super Girls? [*Applause*] Yes. You can't—they're standing up, but you can't really see them—[*laughter*]—because they're in kindergarten and first grade. They are today's youngest scientists, at 6 years old. They built their device out of Legos. They realized that some people who might be paralyzed or arthritic might have trouble turning pages on a book, so they invented this page turner. It was awesome. [*Laughter*] It was working so well, despite the fact, as they pointed out—this is a quote—they said, "This is just a prototype." [*Laughter*] That's what they said. So this is just a—I said, well, how'd you come up with the idea? They said, "Well, we had a brainstorming session." [*Laughter*] And then, one of them asked, "Mr. President, have you had brainstorming sessions?" [*Laughter*] I said, yes, but I didn't come up with something as cool as this—[*laughter*]—it's an automatic page turner. Unbelievable.

Ruchi Pandya—where's Ruchi? There's Ruchi. Found a way to use a single—[*applause*]—Richi found a way to use a single drop of blood to test a person's heart function, much like a person with diabetes tests their blood sugar.

Anvita Gupta—where's Anvita? There she is. Used artificial intelligence and biochemistry to identify potential treatments for cancer, tuberculosis, Ebola. What she's done is, she's developed an algorithm that could potentially, significantly speed up the process of finding drugs that might work against these diseases.

Something smells like it's burning there—[*laughter*]—and I don't think it's an experiment. [*Laughter*] I think it's somebody's camera. Do we have it under control? We don't see any flames bursting. Yes? All right. Okay, it sounds like a little electrical short, but let's keep monitoring that. [*Laughter*] Exits will be—[*laughter*]—in that direction, should anything happen. The last time there was a fire here, the British were invading. So—[*laughter*].

But Anvita's algorithm has the potential of speeding up pathways to discovering what drugs would work on what diseases and is consistent with some of the work that we announced around precision medicine that we are funding at a significant pace here at the White House.

Now, I should point out that, like several of the young people here, Anvita and Ruchi are first-generation Americans. Their parents came here, in part, so their kids could develop their talents and make a difference in the world. And we're really glad they did.

So I want to congratulate all of you for your remarkable achievements. You've made a lot of people proud: your parents, your teachers, your friends, your mentors. And as President, I'm proud of you, because America is going to be stronger and smarter and healthier and a much more interesting place because of you.

But it's not enough for our country just to be proud of you. We've also got to support you. We've got to make sure that young people like you are going to keep on having what you need to discover and experiment and to innovate. So I've got three announcements to make that really were already kind of in the works before I met you guys, but it's a pretty good occasion to announce them because you're so inspiring.

First, four years ago, I set a national goal to provide 98 percent of Americans with high-speed wireless Internet so that any young scientist or entrepreneur could access the world's information. Today I can announce that we

have achieved that goal, and we did it ahead of schedule. That's a big deal.

Second, to make sure that we keep expanding broadband across the country, I'm creating a new team called the Broadband Opportunity Council, made up of leaders across Government, who will work with business and communities to invest in next-generation Internet nationwide. Because this not just going to be a key for your ability to learn and create; it's also a key for America's ability to compete and lead in the world.

Number three, no young person in America should miss out on the chance to excel in these fields just because they don't have the resources. So 5 years ago, we launched a campaign called Educate To Innovate, to help more of our students explore science, technology, engineering and math. Today I'm pleased to announce $240 million in new contributions from businesses, from schools, from foundations across the country to help kids learn in these STEM fields. So we are very, very proud to make that announcement.

Corporations have pledged to help expand high-quality science and technology education to more than 1.5 million students. More than 120 universities have pledged to help train 20,000 new engineers to tackle the toughest challenges of this century. Foundations like the Howard Hughes Medical Institute and the Gates Foundation and the Simons Foundation will support scientists early in their careers with mentoring and funding. And all told, these new commitments bring our grand total up to $1 billion in commitments to our kids since we first got this initiative started 5 years ago.

And I was talking to some of the folks who are helping to finance our efforts, and one of the things that they've discovered is that it's not enough just to talk about STEM. Part of what's important to do is also to recognize that what you do in math and engineering and science has a purpose to it; that there are huge challenges that we have to solve in how we have clean energy and how do we clean up our environment and how do we solve crippling diseases like Parkinson's or Alzheimer's. And when we give students the inspiration not just of—that math and science are inherently interesting and technology and engineering are inherently interesting, but there's actual problems to solve, it turns out that young people, they rise to the challenge. And that's what's so exciting about it.

We don't want to just increase the number of American students in STEM, we want to make sure everybody is involved. We want to increase the diversity of STEM programs as well. And that's been a theme of this Science Fair. We get the most out of all our Nation's talent, and that means reaching out to boys and girls, men and women of all races, all backgrounds. Science is for all of us. And we want our classrooms and labs and workplaces and media to reflect that.

And this is something that Megan Smith, our Chief Technology Officer, is really keen about. Part of the problem is, we don't tell the stories enough of the incredible scientists and inventors along the way who are women or people of color, and as a consequence, people don't see themselves as potential scientists. Except, the good news is, these young women and African American and Latino and Asian American folks, young people who are here today, you guys certainly see yourselves as scientists. So you're helping to inspire your classmates and kids who are coming up behind you to pursue these dreams as well. And that's what's so exciting.

Because the United States has always been a place that loves science. We've always been obsessed with tinkering and discovering and inventing and pushing the very boundaries of what's possible. That's who we are. It's in our DNA. Technological discovery helped us become the world's greatest economic power. Scientific and medical breakthroughs helped us become the greatest source of hope around the world. And that's not just our past, that's also our future, because of amazing young people like this.

So I want to thank you for inspiring me. You got me off to a good start today. [*Laughter*] Keep exploring. Keep dreaming. Keep asking why. Don't settle for what you already know.

Never stop believing in the power of your ideas, your imagination, your hard work to change the world.

And to all the adults in the room, and to any Members of Congress who might be listening—[*laughter*]—just think about all—oh, Eddie Bernice Johnson is here, an outstanding Member of Congress, who's a big supporter of STEM education. Just remember, all these young people—to continue to pursue the research that might bring about a new clean energy source or might cure a disease, a lot of them are going to need the capacity to get research positions and fellowships and grants. And that—particularly when it comes to basic research—has typically been funded by the Federal Government. And my Federal budget promotes a significant increase in the kinds of research that needs to happen. Unfortunately, some of the budgets coming out of Congress don't make those same commitments.

So it's not enough for us to just lift up young people and say, great job, way to go. You also have to have labs to go to, and you've got to be able to support yourself while you're doing this amazing research. And that involves us as a society making the kind of investments that are going to be necessary for us to continue to innovate for many, many years to come.

So congratulations. Give all these young people a big round of applause. Go take a look at their outstanding stuff. It's really great.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:15 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Oheneba Boachie-Adjei, president and founder, Foundation of Orthopedics and Complex Spine; Nikhil Behari, student, North Allegheny Intermediate High School in Pittsburgh, PA; Emily Bergenroth, Alicia Cutter, Karissa Cheng, Addy Oneal, and Emery Dodson, members of the Daisy Girl Scout Troop 411 in Tulsa, OK; Ruchi Pandya, student, Lynbrook High School in San Jose, CA; and Anvita Gupta, student, Carl Hayden Community High School in Scottsdale, AZ.

Remarks at the SelectUSA Investment Summit in National Harbor, Maryland

March 23, 2015

Thank you so much. Thank you. Please have a seat. Well, thank you, everybody. And let me begin by thanking Penny Pritzker for her outstanding leadership. We've got six Cabinet Secretaries and dozens of U.S. Ambassadors here, which should tell you that SelectUSA is a major priority for this administration. Since I was here with you 17 months ago, this gathering has doubled in size. So I want to thank all 2,600 of you: elected officials and local leaders from across this country and business leaders from around the world. Thank you for making this a priority as well.

The fact is, there's never been a more exciting time for us to do business together. And today I want to talk about why America is not only the right place for you to invest, but why America is the safest, strongest, smartest place for you to invest than we've been in a very long time.

After the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, America is now in the midst of the longest streak of private sector job growth on record: 60 straight months, 12 million new jobs. Businesses in America have added more than 200,000 jobs each month for 12 straight months. That's the first time that's happened in nearly 40 years.

Our unemployment rate has fallen from a peak of 10 percent in 2009 to 5.5 percent today. After a decade of outsourcing, we're starting to bring good jobs back to America. Over the last 5 years, manufacturers have added jobs at a rate not seen since the 1980s. In fact, the manufacturing sector is actually growing faster than the rest of the economy. And last week, I announced nearly $500 million in new public and private investment in strengthening American manufacturing.

And even though the United States is already home to more foreign direct investment than any other country in the world, we've worked hard to address some of the challenges that held us back for too long. Our high school graduation rate is now at an alltime high. More young people are earning their college degrees than ever before. Our energy production is booming, our energy costs are low, our leadership on climate change is restored. On the fiscal front, our deficits have shrunk by two-thirds. Our health care costs are flattening out for the first time in half a century.

Over the past 6 years, we've worked hard to make ourselves a smarter place to invest and to do business than any other country in the world. So we've got a good story to tell. And that's one reason I created SelectUSA, the first-ever Government-wide initiative to encourage more companies from around the world to invest and create jobs right here in the United States. We've got a good story to tell, but we wanted to make sure all of you had a chance to hear it. And the SelectUSA team wakes up every morning with one mission: bringing job-creating investment to the United States of America. It's a kind of one-stop shop, sort of a matchmaking service for investment.

Economic development organizations from around the country can connect with foreign investors from around the world who are interested in bringing their businesses here. Now, understand, a lot of State and local leaders in this room have been working tirelessly for a long time to attract foreign investment. The idea behind SelectUSA is just to make it easier for you to do that and easier for our international partners to find the best opportunities.

And by the beginning of this year, SelectUSA had assisted more than a thousand clients, helping to generate more than $20 billion of investment in the United States, investment that has spurred economic growth and created jobs all across the country. The companies in this room have invested $13 billion over the last year, which will create an estimated 32,500 new jobs.

So what's great about SelectUSA is that everybody wins. Communities that welcome foreign investors see more jobs and economic activity, and they can reach more potential investors. The companies that invest in America have access to the largest market in the world, and it's a market that is strong and stable and growing.

And one thing I want to emphasize: It's not just big corporations or billion-dollar investments that make a difference. With the help of SelectUSA, for example, a Canadian company named Peds Legwear invested $7 million to rescue a failing sock company in Burke County, North Carolina. And that investment saved 45 jobs. They recently cut the ribbon on a new plant that will ultimately create more than 200 new jobs. [*Laughter*] Had a little cheer back there. [*Applause*] That's good.

With the help from SelectUSA, Reha Technology, a Swiss medical robotics firm, just announced its merger with an American company called Interactive Motion Technologies. The new company will headquarter in Watertown, Massachusetts, and today it's announcing a new $5 million investment to expand this year.

So we're seeing real results from SelectUSA, and we want to build on that momentum and get even more of you to invest. So today we're going to expand and improve our services. We're launching a new partnership between State and Federal economic development officials. We're launching the SelectUSA Academy, with online and onsite training programs for investors. We're improving our online investment tools, helping companies identify State-based incentives so that they can decide where to invest.

So, for companies considering new investment here, I want to be as clear as possible. The United States of America is the best place in the world to do business. We've got the most skilled and productive workers, the best universities, the most innovative entrepreneurs in the world. We're the global leader in patents, home not only to more R&D investment than any other country, but to nearly one-third of all R&D investment in the world. Our access to global markets makes it easy to ship goods made in the U.S.A. around the world. Our commitment to the rule of law and strong

intellectual property protections make America a dependable place to innovate and do business.

And we're a country that always believes we can do better, a country that adapts and advances and sets new standards for new times. It's one of the reasons why I have put forward a budget for this coming fiscal year that reflects the realities of the new economy. We're going to give workers and businesses the tools they need to succeed in a fast-paced, highly competitive, constantly changing world. And that means new investments in education, new investments in job training, including making 2 years of community college free, because we want to make sure that our workers continue to be prepared to fill the jobs that you intend to bring here. It means new investments in manufacturing and 21st-century infrastructure that 21st-century businesses need. We're modernizing ports, strengthening our bridges, making Internet and wireless and broadband far more accessible more quickly.

Now, that's my budget. I recognize there's something called Congress here, and we've got—[*laughter*]—there are going to be some negotiations taking place. So far, Republicans in Congress have put forward a different kind of budget. But I'm confident that we can find a way forward. I'm confident that we can find a path that doesn't undermine our standing, but strengthens it. Because the things that help businesses grow are not partisan. There shouldn't be anything partisan about making sure that our kids get the best education possible or that we've got world-class infrastructure.

We're working together on a bipartisan trade promotion authority and strong new trade deals from Asia to Europe that aren't just free but are also fair and reciprocal, trade deals that help businesses grow our exports and put American workers first. And I'm confident we can, together, reauthorize the Export-Import Bank of the United States, giving our businesses one more tool that they need to compete.

Today I'm pleased to announce a new action I'm also taking to make it easier for global companies who are present here today to launch and invest in the U.S. My administration is going to reform the L–1B visa category, which allows corporations to temporarily move workers from a foreign office to a U.S. office in a faster, simpler way. And this could benefit hundreds of thousands of nonimmigrant workers and their employers; that, in turn, will benefit our entire economy and spur additional investment.

Of course, as all of you know, one of the things that would make America even more attractive to businesses and that would grow our economy and shrink our deficits and keep this country safer, stronger, and smarter would be a comprehensive immigration reform package. And that's why I'm going to continue to push and prod and poke and cajole friends in the Republican Party to get on board and help us get this done. We need to get immigration reform done here in the United States of America. That's who we are.

So the bottom line is this: America is proudly open for business, and we want to make it as simple and as attractive for you to set up shop here as is possible. That is what this summit is all about. I hope you take full advantage of the opportunities that are here. This is a pretty good networking session. I can't even see the folks way out in the back. [*Laughter*] There is—there are a lot of deals to be done right here under this roof. And I hope that everybody is going to take full advantage of it.

Because we're committed to SelectUSA for the long haul. We are committed to building partnerships with you so that our companies and our communities can thrive together. And we intend to be with you not just today or tomorrow, but in the years and decades ahead.

That's my commitment to you. Because we are confident that if you invest in any of the communities that are represented here, what you will find is not only outstanding workers and not just outstanding infrastructure and not just an extraordinary market and not just cheap energy, but what you will find is that the American people like doing business and they respect business, and they're looking forward to working with you to make sure that your companies succeed, and that the faith that you place in those communities is ultimately going

to result in outstanding results for your company. All right?

Thank you very much, everybody. Good luck.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:39 p.m. at the Gaylord National Resort and Convention Center.

Memorandum on Expanding Broadband Deployment and Adoption by Addressing Regulatory Barriers and Encouraging Investment and Training
March 23, 2015

Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies

Subject: Expanding Broadband Deployment and Adoption by Addressing Regulatory Barriers and Encouraging Investment and Training

Access to high-speed broadband is no longer a luxury; it is a necessity for American families, businesses, and consumers.

Affordable, reliable access to high-speed broadband is critical to U.S. economic growth and competitiveness. High-speed broadband enables Americans to use the Internet in new ways, expands access to health services and education, increases the productivity of businesses, and drives innovation throughout the digital ecosystem. The private sector and Federal, State, and local governments have made substantial investments to expand broadband access in the United States, but more must be done to improve the availability and quality of high-speed broadband, particularly in areas lacking competitive choices.

Today, more than 50 million Americans cannot purchase a wired broadband connection at speeds the Federal Communications Commission has defined as the minimum for adequate broadband service, and only 29 percent of Americans can choose from more than one service provider at that speed. As a result, the costs, benefits, and availability of high-speed broadband Internet are not evenly distributed—with considerable variation among States and between urban and rural areas.

The Federal Government has an important role to play in developing coordinated policies to promote broadband deployment and adoption, including promoting best practices, breaking down regulatory barriers, and encouraging further investment. Doing so will help deliver higher quality, lower cost broadband to more families, businesses, and communities and allow communities to benefit fully from those investments.

Therefore, by the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, I hereby direct the following:

Section 1. Policy. It shall be the policy of the Federal Government for executive departments and agencies having statutory authorities applicable to broadband deployment (agencies) to use all available and appropriate authorities to: identify and address regulatory barriers that may unduly impede either wired broadband deployment or the infrastructure to augment wireless broadband deployment; encourage further public and private investment in broadband networks and services; promote the adoption and meaningful use of broadband technology; and otherwise encourage or support broadband deployment, competition, and adoption in ways that promote the public interest.

Agencies shall pay particular attention to opportunities to promote broadband adoption and competition through incentives to new entrants in the market for broadband services; modernizing regulations; accurately measuring real-time broadband availability and speeds; and other possible measures, including supporting State, local, and tribal governments interested in encouraging or investing in high-speed broadband networks.

Agencies shall also pay particular attention to increasing broadband access for underserved communities, including in rural areas, and to exploring opportunities to reduce costs for potential low-income users.

In so doing, agencies shall ensure: protection of existing and planned Federal, State,

local, and tribal government missions and capabilities for delivering services to the public, including those related to national security, public safety, and emergency response.

Agencies shall coordinate the activities discussed in this section through the Broadband Opportunity Council established in section 2 of this memorandum.

Sec. 2. Establishing the Broadband Opportunity Council. (a) There is established the Broadband Opportunity Council (Council), to be co-chaired by the Secretaries of Commerce and Agriculture, or their designees. In addition to the Co-Chairs, the Council shall include the heads, or their designees, of:

(i) the Department of Defense;
(ii) the Department of State;
(iii) the Department of the Interior;
(iv) the Department of Labor;
(v) the Department of Health and Human Services;
(vi) the Department of Homeland Security;
(vii) the Department of Housing and Urban Development;
(viii) the Department of Justice;
(ix) the Department of Transportation;
(x) the Department of the Treasury;
(xi) the Department of Energy;
(xii) the Department of Education;
(xiii) the Department of Veterans Affairs;
(xiv) the Environmental Protection Agency;
(xv) the General Services Administration;
(xvi) the Small Business Administration;
(xvii) the Institute of Museum and Library Services;
(xviii) the National Science Foundation;
(xix) the Council on Environmental Quality;
(xx) the Office of Science and Technology Policy;
(xxi) the Office of Management and Budget;
(xxii) the Council of Economic Advisers;
(xxiii) the Domestic Policy Council;
(xxiv) the National Economic Council;
(xxv) the National Security Council staff; and
(xxvi) such other Federal agencies or entities as determined appropriate pursuant to subsection (c) of this section.

(b) The Council shall consult with other relevant agencies and with the Federal Communications Commission as appropriate. The Council shall also coordinate with existing Federal working groups and committees involved with broadband.

(c) The Director of the National Economic Council and the Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy shall review, on a periodic basis, the membership of the Broadband Opportunity Council to ensure that it includes necessary Federal Government entities and that the Council is an effective mechanism for coordinating among agencies on the goals and policies outlined in this memorandum. The Director of the National Economic Council and the Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy may add or remove members of the Council, as appropriate, based on that review.

Sec. 3. Functions of the Broadband Opportunity Council. (a) As permitted by law, the agencies as members of the Council shall consult with State, local, tribal, and territorial governments, as well as telecommunications companies, utilities, trade associations, philanthropic entities, policy experts, and other interested parties to identify and assess regulatory barriers and opportunities as outlined in section 1 of this memorandum to determine possible actions.

(b) Not later than 15 days from the date of this memorandum, each agency shall designate a representative to serve as the main point of contact and will notify the Co-Chairs of the Council of that designee.

(c) Not later than 60 days from the date of this memorandum, agencies shall submit to the Council a comprehensive survey of Federal programs, including the allocated funding amounts, that currently support or could reasonably be modified to support broadband deployment and adoption, as well as a survey of all agency-specific policies and rules with the direct or indirect effect of facilitating or regulating investment in or deployment of wired

and wireless broadband networks. Spectrum allocation decisions affecting broadband deployment and other policies related to spectrum allocation are excluded from this survey and from the work of the Council, and shall continue in accordance with the Presidential Memorandum of June 14, 2013 (Expanding America's Leadership in Wireless Innovation).

(d) Not later than 120 days from the date of this memorandum, agencies shall submit to the Council an initial list of actions that each of their agencies could take to identify and address regulatory barriers, incentivize investment, promote best practices, align funding decisions, and otherwise support wired broadband deployment and adoption.

(e) Not later than 150 days from the date of this memorandum, the Council shall report to the President, through the Director of the National Economic Council, a coordinated and agreed prioritized list of recommendations on actions that agencies can take to support broadband deployment and adoption. Such recommendations shall include a list of priority actions and rulemakings, as well as timelines to complete them. Before finalizing and submitting these recommendations, the full Council shall meet at least twice.

Sec. 4. General Provisions. (a) Nothing in this memorandum shall be construed to impair or otherwise affect:

(i) the authority granted by law to a department or agency, or the head thereof;
(ii) the functions of the Director of the Office of Management and Budget relating to budgetary, administrative, or legislative proposals; or
(iii) the authority of the Federal Communications Commission concerning spectrum allocation decisions.

(b) Nothing in this memorandum shall be construed to require the disclosure of classified information, law enforcement sensitive information, or other information that must be protected in the interests of national security.

(c) This memorandum shall not require duplicate efforts underway in accordance with other Executive Orders and memorandums.

(d) This memorandum shall be implemented consistent with applicable law and subject to the availability of appropriations.

(e) Independent agencies are strongly encouraged to comply with the requirements of this memorandum.

(f) This memorandum is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by any party against the United States, its departments, agencies, or entities, its officers, employees, or agents, or any other person.

BARACK OBAMA

The President's News Conference With President Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai of Afghanistan
March 24, 2015

Crash of Germanwings Flight 4U9525 Near Digne-les-Bains, France

President Obama. Good afternoon, everybody. Please have a seat. Before I begin, I want to say that our thoughts and our prayers are with our friends in Europe, especially the people of Germany and Spain, following a terrible airplane crash in France. It's particularly heartbreaking because it apparently includes the loss of so many children, some of them infants.

I called German Chancellor Merkel, and I hope to speak with President Rajoy of Spain later today, to express the condolences of the American people and to offer whatever assistance that we can as they investigate what has proven to be an awful tragedy. Our teams are in close contact, and we're working to confirm how many Americans may have been on board. Germany and Spain are among our strongest allies in the world, and our message to them is that, as their steadfast friend and

ally, America stands with them at this moment of sorrow.

Afghanistan-U.S. Relations

Now, it is a great pleasure to welcome President Ghani to the White House. As many of you know, President Ghani spent time here in the United States, as a student and as a scholar. He happened to go to Columbia University, where we both studied, and then spent time at the World Bank just down the street from here. And so his life reflects, in many ways, the friendship and mutual respect between Americans and Afghans. And in that spirit, Mr. President, I want to extend to you the warmest of welcomes.

President Ghani's presence here today, along with Chief Executive Abdullah, underscores Afghans'—Afghanistan's progress. In last year's election, millions of Afghans defied the threats from the Taliban and bravely cast their ballots. In the spirit of compromise and putting their interests behind the interests of the nation, President Ghani and Dr. Abdullah ensured the first peaceful and democratic transfer of power in Afghanistan's history. And together, they now lead a national unity Government that reflects the diversity, the strength and the determination of the Afghan people.

Their Government signed the bilateral security agreement between our two countries, and on December 31, after more than 13 years, America's combat mission in Afghanistan came to a responsible end. Afghan forces now have full responsibility for security across their country. Some 330,000 Afghans serve in the police and security forces, and they are making extraordinary sacrifices, fighting and often dying for their country, and they continue to grow stronger month by month.

Today we honor the many Afghans—men, women, and children—who have given their lives for their country. We salute the more than 2,200 Americans, patriots who made the ultimate sacrifice in Afghanistan, and the many more who were wounded. This morning President Ghani and Dr. Abdullah visited Arlington National Cemetery to pay their respects to our fallen heroes. We are grateful for that gesture of gratitude, and we know it meant a lot to the families as well. We'll see the bonds again between our people on display when President Ghani has an opportunity to address Congress tomorrow.

So with a new Government in Afghanistan and with the end of our combat mission, this visit is an opportunity to begin a new chapter between our two nations. President Ghani and Dr. Abdullah, I thank you both for your strong support of the partnership between our two nations. And yesterday they had a chance to spend time at Camp David with our respective teams and had excellent discussions on how we can move forward together. Today, guided by our strategic partnership, we focused on several areas.

First, we agreed to continue to keep in place our close security cooperation. Afghanistan remains a very dangerous place, and insurgents still launch attacks, including cowardly suicide bombings against civilians. President Ghani is pursuing reforms to further strengthen Afghan security forces, including respect for human rights. And as part of the ongoing NATO mission, the United States will continue to train, advise, and assist Afghan security forces.

As we announced yesterday, we'll work with Congress on funding to sustain 352,000 Afghan police and troops through 2017. At the same time, we'll continue to conduct targeted counterterrorism operations, and we'll—we agreed to maintain a dialogue on our counterterrorism partnership in the years ahead.

Now, at our peak 4 years ago, the United States had more than 100,000 troops in Afghanistan. In support of today's narrow missions, we have just under 10,000 troops there. Last year, I announced a timeline for drawing down our forces further, and I've made it clear that we're determined to preserve the gains our troops have won. Now, President Ghani has requested some flexibility on our drawdown timelines. I've consulted with General Campbell in Afghanistan and my national security team, and I've decided that we will maintain our current posture of 9,800 troops through the end of this year.

The specific trajectory of the 2016 drawdown will be established later this year to enable our final consolidation to a Kabul-based Embassy presence by the end of 2016. Now, this flexibility reflects our reinvigorated partnership with Afghanistan, which is aimed at making Afghanistan secure and preventing it from being used to launch terrorist attacks. Reconciliation and a political settlement remain the surest way to achieve the full drawdown of U.S. and foreign troops from Afghanistan in a way that safeguards international interests and peace in Afghanistan, as well as U.S. national security interests.

Second, and since the best way to ensure Afghanistan's progress is a political settlement, we're going to continue to support an Afghan-led reconciliation process. President Ghani, you've shown bold leadership in reaching out to Pakistan, which is critical to the pursuit of peace. Afghanistan and the United States agree on what the Taliban must do, which is break with Al Qaida, renounce violence, and abide by Afghan laws, including the protections for women and minorities.

Third, we'll continue to support the national unity Government in its efforts to truly serve the Afghan people. We discussed the urgent need, with Parliament's support, to seat a full Cabinet. President Ghani, in your Inaugural Address you spoke forcefully about the need to combat corruption, uphold rule of law, and strengthen democratic institutions, and the United States very much commends you for those efforts. And you moved many Afghans with your eloquent tribute to your wife and partner, First Lady Rula Ghani. America will continue to be your partner in advancing the rights and dignity of all Afghans, including women and girls.

And finally, we'll continue to support the development that underpins stability and improves the lives of the Afghan people. Over the years, there have been major gains: dramatic improvements in public health, life expectancy, literacy, including for millions of girls who are in school. President Ghani is a leading expert on development, and I've been impressed by the reforms that he's pursuing to make Afghanistan more self-reliant. He wants to empower Afghans in these efforts, and that's why, under the new development partnership that we announced yesterday, U.S. economic assistance will increasingly go through Afghan institutions, in support of Afghan priorities, with an emphasis on accountability, performance, and achieving results.

In closing, I'd note that, as many of you know, President Ghani is, by training, an anthropologist, as was my mother. It's been said that "the purpose of anthropology is to make the world safe for human differences." Afghanistan, and our world, is marked by incredible diversity and differences of history and culture and faiths. But I believe that the progress that we've made in this visit will advance the goal for which so many of your citizens, Mr. President, have sacrificed over the years: the goal of making our two countries and the world safer.

President Ghani, Chief Executive Abdullah, thank you both for your leadership and your partnership. America's combat mission in Afghanistan may be over, but our commitment to the Afghanistan people, that will endure.

President Ghani.

President Ghani. [*Inaudible*]—President Obama, first of all, I'd like to express the deep sympathies of the Government and the people of Afghanistan to German and Spanish families and governments. Both of these countries took part in the ISAF coalition. They have made major commitments, and they have sacrificed in Afghanistan.

I'd like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to those common sacrifices and, simultaneously, take the opportunity to pay tribute to the 2,215 American service men and women who made—paid the ultimate sacrifice; more than 22,000 American soldiers who have been wounded in action; civilians, numerous contractors, and others. You stood shoulder to shoulder with us, and I'd like to say thank you.

I would also like to thank the American taxpayer for his and her hard-earned dollars that have enabled us. Yesterday, at the Pentagon, I saw a young girl; her name is Reese. And her father came out of retirement, out of reserve, to serve again in Afghanistan. She is sending a

care package every week to her father. And I want to thank her and the fathers of all other American children who are making sure that their parents are helping us and standing next to us.

Reese, I promised, now has 3 million Afghan sisters in school. And those sisters are dreaming of achievements that whatever career path, and hopefully, one day we'll see an Afghan woman President. It should not be soon—as not be too far, because we soon—we now have four women in the Cabinet. That's 20 percent of our Cabinet are women. I hope that some other countries will match us. [*Laughter*] That we are intent.

And thank you for the reference to Afghanistan's First Lady. She was delighted that—to have an opportunity to speak to Mrs. Obama. She has devoted her life to the most underprivileged of Afghans, and all of us are committed to make sure that 36 percent of Afghans that live below poverty will have—will live with dignity and one day, not in the distant future, see prosperity.

Dr. Abdullah and I are grateful for the reception that you've accorded us, Mr. President. Your national security team has gone out of its way to engage in intensive, comprehensive discussion, and both of us would like to thank Secretary Kerry for the loss of hours of sleep we caused you—[*laughter*]—and for your very able diplomacy and catalyzing the unity that today is on display. The Government of national unity is going to be an enduring phenomena, and both of us stand for the unity against the divisions that our opponents and enemies had hoped for.

This unity is a reflection of the desire of the Afghan public to overcome the last 200 years of our political history, where rarely public figures have chosen the country before themselves. We are committed in this regard to emulate the Founding Fathers and Mothers of the United States, where national interest would stand above personal or factional interests.

Afghans—I'm glad that the security transition is completed. You fulfilled your promise to your people, and we fulfilled our promise to our people. Afghans, for millennia, have guarded our homeland and have a reputation for serving. The last years were an exception, when we needed help, and we're grateful that help was provided, but we are pleased that the security transition has been met according to the timeline that you set. Today, the combat role of the United States in Afghanistan is over.

But the train, advise, and assist mission is a vital part of our collective interests and collective endeavors. Tragedy brought us together; interests now unite us. And we can assure you that the Government of national unity has revitalized the partnership and looks at this partnership with the United States as foundational not just for Afghanistan's stability, but for regional and global stability.

Much binds us together, and the flexibility that has been provided for 2015 will be used to accelerate reforms, to ensure that the Afghan National Security Forces are much better led, equipped, trained, and are focused on their fundamental mission.

I'm pleased to say that the departure of 120,000 international troops has not brought about the security gap or the collapse that was often anticipated. I'd like to pay tribute at this moment to the continuous sacrifice of the Afghan security forces, civilians, and a patriotic nation.

Our patriotism is part of, simultaneously, our internationalism. We are unique in that we have embraced democratic ways. We are very proud of our Islamic civilization, but it is an Islam that is truly in dialogue with the world. And we have the capacity to speak truth to terror. They do not speak for Islam. We do. And it's the genuine Islam that is interested in dialogue between civilizations and cooperation and endeavor forward.

On regional cooperation, we have taken bold and novel steps; we do hope that these steps would be reciprocated, because the threats that exist, the changing ecology of terror, are making it imperative that all governments cooperate with each other.

Today, the state system as we have known it is under attack. These are not classic national liberation movements; these are destructive, nihilistic movements. And it's essential that we

confront them with vigor and determination. But we must differentiate between those and Afghan citizens who desire peace.

Any political difference, anything that divides us must be resolved politically, and we have shown the wisdom and determination that we can arrive at unity of purpose. So our commitment to peace is clear. What we require is reciprocity so that Afghan patriots will choose the country over themselves and unite in resolving whatever might be that divides us.

But we will not have peace with those who use our territory as a proxy for other purposes, as a battleground for alien forces, or as a launching pad for global terrorism.

This trip has provided us an opportunity to have a comprehensive overview, and I again want to express thank you for your commitment to submit a bill to Congress for support of our security forces 2017.

There's much work that lies ahead of us. And the flexibility that has been provided will be used to maximum effect to accelerate reforms to ensure that our security forces honor human rights; that they internalize the practices that binds an army, a police force, a secret service to the people. Violence against our people has no place within our security culture, and we will overcome those types of legacies.

It's again a pleasure to be standing next to a graduate of Columbia University. [*Laughter*] There's much that unites us. And your mother was an inspiration to us. I understand that the President of the World Bank actually got the job because she—he invoked your mother's teachings to convince you that an anthropologist could lead the World Bank. So thank you for according him that rare opportunity.

President Obama. He's doing a great job.

The—all right, with that, let's take a couple questions. Leo Shane, Military Times.

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. This is on, right?

President Obama. Yes, it's on. I can hear you.

U.S. Troop Levels in Afghanistan/U.S. Military Operations in Afghanistan/U.S. Defense Spending

Q. With the increased slowdown in the drawdown here, we're looking at more risk, more danger for U.S. troops that are in Afghanistan. How do you justify that to them? How do you tell them that the mission is still worth it? And how do you assure them that there is an end coming to this mission?

And for President Ghani, you've talked the last couple days a lot about the sacrifice of U.S. troops. You were at Arlington earlier today. How do you tell them that this continued sacrifice will be worth it to them as well?

President Obama. Well, first of all, I think it's important, Leo, to remember the timeline for a withdrawal down to a Embassy-centered presence, a normalization of our presence in Afghanistan remains the end of 2016. So that hasn't changed. Our transition out of a combat role has not changed.

Now, I am the first to say that as long as our men and women in uniform are serving in Afghanistan, there are risks involved. It's a dangerous place. Casualties have come down precipitously as we've engaged in the drawdown. It's been over 90 days since two Americans were killed in Afghanistan. That has occurred precisely because we're not in a combat role. And I think it is worth noting the significant casualties that the Afghan security services have incurred. As we've drawn down, they've stood up, and they're fighting. And they're fighting with courage and tenacity, and they're getting better month by month.

But you can't minimize the sacrifices that our military families make. It means some folks are going to be rotating back into Afghanistan for a few extra months relative to what otherwise would have been the case. We're essentially moving the drawdown pace over to the right for several months, in part to compensate for the lengthy period it took for Government formation; in part because we want to make sure that we're doing everything we can to help Afghan security forces succeed so we don't have to go back, so we don't have to respond in an emergency because counterterrorist—or

because terrorist activities are being launched out of Afghanistan.

We're on the path to do that, and it was my assessment as Commander in Chief that it made sense for us to provide a few extra months for us to be able to help on things like logistics, making sure that equipment is not just in place, but it's also used properly; that the training and advising and strategic input that's been provided continues through this fighting season, in part so that President Karzai [Ghani],* who has taken on the mantle of Commander in Chief in a way that we have not seen in the past from an Afghan President, can do a serious review and can assess here is where our strengths are, here's where our weaknesses are, and we can proceed with more effective joint planning going forward.

So the bottom line is, our men and women in uniform make enormous sacrifices. Their families do too; they serve alongside them. This will mean that there are going to be some of our folks who are in Afghanistan under the new schedule who would have been home. But it is important to keep in perspective, first of all, that we've gone down from 100,000 down to under 10,000; that they are not on the front lines because they're not in a combat role. We are doing all that we can do to make sure that force protection is a priority for those who are in Afghanistan. And the date for us to have completed our drawdown will not change.

But it is my judgment, it's the judgment of General Campbell and others who are on the ground, that providing this additional timeframe during this fighting season for us to be able to help the Afghan security forces succeed is well worth it. And in that sense, once again, we are asking our men and women in uniform to fight on behalf of our freedom and on behalf of a more orderly world.

It does, perhaps, raise one thought, which is, right now there's a debate going up on Capitol Hill about budgets. This would be a good time for my friends up on Capitol Hill, including on the other side of the aisle, to take a look at their budgets. If we're holding both our defense and nondefense budgets to 2006 levels, it's a lot harder for us to do the job that we need to do not only on the national security side, but also here at home, making sure that when our men and women come home, and when they potentially go into civilian life, that they've got a strong economy, that their kids have good schools, that they can send their kids to college, that they get the veterans benefits that they have so richly earned and deserve. That would be a good way for us to express the thanks for the sacrifices they consistently make.

President Ghani. I met yesterday the widow of General Greene. She would like the memory of her husband to be preserved by a sustainable Afghanistan that is secure. The 2,215 Americans that have died must not die in vain. They must leave behind a legacy of a stable Afghanistan. And it's that preservation of those gains that I think inspires the American service men and women to obey the call of their commander, the order of their commanders.

Second, we have taken them out of the harm's way. As the President mentioned, for the past 100 days, because the combat role has ended, the exposure, the number of casualties is really down. There isn't—my most horrible reading of the day is my first, middle-of-the-day, and end-of-the-day security reports where I see the casualties of the Afghan figures. But thank God they're no longer American or European casualties.

John Campbell is making sure that they remain in support role. Their train, advise, assist role has risks, but they're nowhere comparable to combat role. And end of that combat role is very significant to this. And again, the institutional gains that would be achieved through the train, advise, and assist role is what will guarantee that the investments of the last 14 years pay off in terms of gains that would ensure.

Last point: Afghanistan is the front line. Because of American engagement in Afghanistan, there have not been attacks on mainland United States. But let's not forget that fortresses

* White House correction.

cannot be built around countries or continents. We are living in an interconnected world, and our security is joined together.

Afghanistan-U.S. Relations/U.S. Military Operations in Afghanistan/Afghan Security Forces

Q. Thank you very much. Parwiz Kawa from Kabul-based—[*inaudible*]—Sobh daily newspaper. President Obama, you're talking about the long-term strategic partnership between Afghanistan and United States. At the same time, you're talking about deadlines about the withdrawal of the soldiers from Afghanistan. How do you ensure the long term—or how do you define the long-term strategy partnership after 2017, or from 2017 onward?

[*At this point, the reporter spoke in Dari, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

Q. Mr. President Ghani, I wanted to—what do you expect, Mr. President—what would the expectation coming to the United States and what would you like to return with to Afghanistan?

President Obama. Oh, no. Please.

[*President Ghani spoke in Dari, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

President Ghani. Our expectations were that our cooperation will be enhanced and we will have a clear vision and practical vision for cooperation—for an enduring cooperation with the United States be there. And this change of environment has occurred, and today, the United States Government and—considers the Government of Afghanistan a really reliable partner.

Commitments that are made are considerable, and the funding proposal of supporting Afghan security forces by 2017 and it has reached to $4.1 billion. It's nothing less—it's a significant issue, it's a very important issue.

And also, yesterday there was a new framework of our economic cooperation was laid out, according to which $800 million were made—a commitment were made, those will be spent through the Afghan budget. But most importantly is the flexibility that has been shown in the area of security cooperation. And this flexibility is going to ensure and provide confidence to our security forces and our people and also is going to send a very strong message to the region that this cooperation is not short term, but is enduring and long term.

President Obama. Our strategic partnership is based on a very simple principle. We want the Afghan people, through their security forces directed by their President and Commander in Chief, to be able to provide for their own security. And our goal is to make sure that we are a strong partner in helping to build and sustain effective Afghan security forces.

So, from the start, when I first came into office, we put additional U.S. troops, coalition troops, and resources into Afghanistan to shift momentum at a time when the Taliban and the enemies of peace and stability inside of Afghanistan, I think, were moving and had momentum.

We broke that momentum, elections took place, and the Afghan National Security Forces began to build up and get trained and become more and more effective. And because of a successful election and a national unity Government and the leadership of President Ghani and Dr. Abdullah, we are now in a position where the Afghan security forces are not only more effective, but they're also better directed by the civilian Government.

We've been able to draw down and remove ourselves from a combat role, as doctor—as President Ghani indicated, without collapse, as was predicted. And Afghan soldiers have fought, and they've fought well. And obviously, there are still improvements to be made, but they're making significant progress.

So the strategic partnership involves us continuing to help support Afghan security forces. That means financially. The international community is going to have to continue to provide assistance to the Afghan Government, which is carrying a significant security load not only for itself, but for the region and, in some ways, the world. And we've made a commitment to do that.

We're going to continue to provide the kind of security cooperation and support that is required—training, assisting, advising, helping on logistics, helping on developing enabler capacity—all the things that go into a modern military, a professional military, a professional police force that can provide security on Afghan soil by Afghans.

And the cooperation and the strategic partnership involves building up the prosperity and opportunities for the Afghan people through the economic development that was mentioned by the President.

So we intend to be working with the Afghan Government and the Afghan people for a long time. And in many ways, our troop presence, our military assistance is just one component of what is a much larger process. And the more successful we are in building Afghan capacity and strengthening the Afghan economy, the more the strategic partnership that we have will be like the partnership that we have with many countries around the world. And it will be based on mutual interest and scientific and educational exchanges and business opportunities and commerce and trade. And that, I think, is the goal that we're all looking for.

Josh Lederman [Associated Press].

Iran/Arab-Israeli Peace Process/Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel/Israel-U.S. Relations

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. You've made very clear that you're not buying Prime Minister Netanyahu's attempts to walk back the comments that he made before the election, opposing Palestinian statehood and that you're reassessing your approach. What could Prime Minister Netanyahu do, if anything, in the short term to persuade you that he's serious about Israeli-Palestinian peace and that he's an honest broker that you could work with? Or is it too late to repair that relationship during your Presidency? And is there any truth to allegations that Israel was spying on the Iran talks?

And, President Ghani, if I may, you've been working very hard to pursue reconciliation talks with the Taliban, but there's some indications that that's not going so well and that they may not be willing to sit down with you. What makes you hopeful that you can get those talks off the ground? And do you want the U.S. to be involved in those talks?

President Obama. Let me, first of all, address your second question about spying allegations. As a general rule, I don't comment on intelligence matters in a big room full of reporters. [*Laughter*] And I think I'll continue that tradition.

But with respect to the possibility of an agreement that ensures that Iran doesn't get a nuclear weapon, we have not just briefed Congress about the progress or lack thereof that's being made, but we also brief the Israelis and our other partners in the region and around the world. And if in fact an agreement is arrived at that we feel confident will prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon, it's going to be there for everybody to see. And people are going to be able to lift up the hood and see what's in there.

So I have confidence that if there's an agreement, it's going to be a good agreement that's good for American security and Israeli security and the region's security. And if it isn't, then there probably won't be an agreement. So there will be, I think, significant transparency in the whole process.

With respect to Israel's relations with the Palestinians, I think it's important to understand that the issue here is not what I believe, but it's what the Palestinians and the parties in the negotiations and the Israeli people believe is possible. That's the most important issue. I've said before, and I'll simply repeat: Prime Minister Netanyahu, in the election runup, stated that a Palestinian state would not occur while he was Prime Minister. And I took him at his word that that's what he meant, and I think that a lot of voters inside of Israel understood him to be saying that fairly unequivocally.

Afterwards, he pointed out that he didn't say "never," but that there would be a series of conditions in which a Palestinian state could potentially be created. But of course, the conditions were such that they would be impossible to meet anytime soon. So even if you accepted, I think, the corrective of Prime Minis-

ter Netanyahu's in subsequent days, there still does not appear to be a prospect of a meaningful framework established that would lead to a Palestinian state even if there were a whole range of conditions and security requirements that might be phased in over a long period of time, which it was always the presumption.

I don't think anybody ever envisioned in any peace agreement, certainly not one that Prime Minister Netanyahu would agree to or that the Israeli people would agree to, that overnight you suddenly have a Palestinian state right next to Jerusalem and that Israel would not have a whole range of security conditions that had to be met, and that it would be phased in over a long period of time.

So the issue has never been, do you create a Palestinian state overnight? The question is, do you create a process and a framework that gives the Palestinians hope, the possibility, that down the road, they have a secure state of their own, standing side by side with a secure, fully recognized Jewish State of Israel?

And I think—it's not just my estimation—I think it's hard to envision how that happens based on the Prime Minister's statements. And so when I said that we have to now do an evaluation of where we are, it's not in reference to our commitment to Israel's military edge in the region, Israel's security, our intelligence cooperation, our military cooperation. That continues unabated. And I will continue to do whatever I need to do to make sure that our friends in Israel are safe. That's what I've done since I've been President, and that's not going to stop. And so the Israeli people need to know that.

But I am required to evaluate honestly how we manage Israeli-Palestinian relations over the next several years. Because up until this point, the premise has been, both under Republican and Democratic administrations, that as difficult as it was, as challenging as it was, the possibility of two states living side by side in peace and security could marginalize more extreme elements, bring together folks at the center and with some common sense, and we could resolve what has been a vexing issue and one that is ultimately a threat to Israel as well.

And that possibility seems very dim. That may trigger, then, reactions by the Palestinians that, in turn, elicit counterreactions by the Israelis. And that could end up leading to a downward spiral of relations that will be dangerous for everybody and bad for everybody.

So bottom line, just to summarize here: Number one, our military and intelligence cooperation with Israel will continue unabated, unaffected, and we are absolutely committed to making sure that the Israeli people are safe, particularly from rocket attacks and terrorist attacks aimed on civilians.

Number two, that the evaluation that's taking place is specific to what happens between Israelis and Palestinians going forward. We'll continue to engage the Israeli Government as well as the Palestinians and ask them where they are interested in going and how do they see this issue being resolved. But what we can't do is pretend that there's a possibility of something that's not there. And we can't continue to premise our public diplomacy based on something that everybody knows is not going to happen at least in the next several years. That is something that we have to, for our own—for the sake of our own credibility, I think we have to be able to be honest about that.

And I guess one last point about this, because obviously, I've heard a lot of the commentary: There's a tendency, I think, in the reporting here to frame this somehow as a personal issue between myself and President—Prime Minister Netanyahu. And I understand why that's done, because when you frame it in those terms, the notion is, well, if we all just get along and everybody cools down, then somehow the problem goes away. I have a very businesslike relationship with the Prime Minister. I've met with him more than any other world leader. I talk to him all the time. He is representing his country's interests the way he thinks he needs to, and I'm doing the same.

So the issue is not a matter of relations between leaders; the issue is a very clear, substantive challenge. We believe that two states is the best path forward for Israel's security, for Palestinian aspirations, and for regional stability. That's our view, and that continues to be

our view. And Prime Minister Netanyahu has a different approach. And so this can't be reduced to a matter of somehow let's all hold hands and sing "Kumbaya." [*Laughter*] This is a matter of figuring out, how do we get through a real knotty policy difference that has great consequences for both countries and for the region? Okay?

Q. Will you consider supporting Palestinian statehood at the U.N.?

President Obama. We're going to do that evaluation. We're going to partly wait for an actual Israeli Government to form.

[*President Ghani spoke in English as follows.*]

President Ghani. Peace is our priority. Don't make premature judgments. [*Laughter*] And what we have asked from the United States, and President Obama has graciously supported it, is to support an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process. And we are confident that this approach will bear the results in time. Peace is always difficult, and it requires focus, attention, and sacrifice, and that's what we are willing to do to bring it about. Mohmand—[*inaudible*].

U.S. Military Operations in Afghanistan/Afghan Security Forces/Afghanistan-U.S. Relations

Q. Thank you very much. Mr. President, I've got a question to Mr. Obama. You just mentioned that Afghanistan is still a dangerous place. While it's a dangerous place, is it the right decision to draw down the force level at a time when it's a dangerous place and meanwhile Afghan forces are less equipped and they cannot fight truly?

[*The reporter and President Ghani spoke in Pashto, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

Q. Mr. President, my question is, the peace process—what was your initial—or your request from the United States President?

President Ghani. The United States has agreed to—with us that the peace process will be led by Afghans, and Afghans will be—will continue this process, and it will be led by Afghans. And this is obvious for us, and we are thankful for the support.

President Obama. Afghanistan is still a dangerous place. The way it's going to become less dangerous is by Afghan security forces and Afghan police being capable of keeping law and order and security in the country. And that is not going to happen if foreign forces are continually relied upon for the basic security of Afghanistan.

So there are going to be specialized areas where we can cooperate, dealing with some of the most vicious terrorist networks. There's going to be intelligence cooperation and counterterrorism cooperation. And there are going to be specialized areas where we can provide logistical support and training and enabling support.

But the fact is, is that unless Afghan soldiers and Afghan police are able to maintain security, at some point, someday, the United States and other coalition forces would leave. And the good news is, what we've seen as we've removed ourselves from combat roles is the Afghan security forces have stepped up. And although they're certainly not as well equipped as coalition forces, they're better equipped than the Taliban. They're better equipped than the Haqqani network.

And so with the kind of leadership that President Ghani is showing as a Commander in Chief, with the leadership that's being shown by a growing cadre of military officers up and down the military chain, Afghan forces are proving themselves and discovering that, in fact, when they fight, they can be successful. And we want to stand with them in that process because we are very much invested in your success.

So, Mr. President, thank you for an outstanding visit.

President Ghani. Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 2:30 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to Gen. John F. Campbell, USA, commander, Res-

olute Support and U.S. Forces–Afghanistan; and Jim Yong Kim, President, World Bank. President Ghani referred to Reese Larson, daughter of Lt. Cmdr. Lonn Larson, USN; and Susan Myers, wife of Maj. Gen. Harold J. Greene, USA, deputy commanding general, Combined Security Transition Command–Afghanistan, who was killed in Afghanistan on August 5, 2014.

Joint Statement by President Obama and President Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai of Afghanistan
March 24, 2015

President Barack Obama welcomed Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah, and the accompanying Afghan delegation to Washington from March 22–26, 2015.

The visit offered an opportunity to renew U.S.-Afghan relations, review the joint achievements of the last 13 years in Afghanistan, and to discuss the actions each country needs to take to ensure that the social, economic, security and human rights gains made over that period are sustained and advanced.

President Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah expressed deep appreciation for the contributions, sacrifices and sustained commitment of the United States that made these achievements possible and underscored that this support is paying dividends for Afghans, Americans, and the international community alike. The Afghan economy has grown more than fourfold over the last 13 years and young Afghans are attending school at unprecedented levels, with girls and women comprising a growing percentage of these students.

The leaders further noted the success of joint counter-terrorism efforts to date and emphasized that sustained U.S. and other international assistance will be important to enable the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) to address the significant security challenges facing Afghanistan and the wider region. President Obama and President Ghani reiterated their commitments under the U.S.-Afghanistan Enduring Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) and the U.S.-Afghanistan Security and Defense Cooperation Agreement (also known as the Bilateral Security Agreement, or BSA) to advance common objectives in these and other areas. The Presidents welcomed the decision of Secretary of State Kerry and Foreign Minister Rabbani made on March 23 at Camp David to meet again in Kabul this year to restart the U.S.-Afghanistan Bilateral Commission meetings and to review progress in the implementation of the SPA.

Promoting Our Shared Democratic Values

President Obama commended President Ghani, Chief Executive Abdullah and the Afghan people on the landmark 2014 presidential election resulting in the first democratic and peaceful transfer of power in Afghanistan's history. President Ghani noted that the broad based and inclusive National Unity Government that emerged from that election enjoys the full support of the Afghan people. President Obama welcomed the recent announcement of a slate of cabinet nominees. President Ghani reaffirmed the new Afghan government's commitment to maintaining and expanding the role of an independent, vibrant civil society and to protecting the human rights of all Afghans. President Obama encouraged a strong partnership between President Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah and welcomed the National Unity Government's goals of promoting security, economic growth, democracy and human rights, in particular the rights of women and minorities. President Obama further welcomed the announcement of the establishment of the Afghan Special Commission for Electoral Reform envisioned in the September 2014 political framework as a means to further the national unity government's goals in this area and offered financial support for Afghan electoral operations and reform efforts.

Advancing Long-Term Security and Strengthening the Peace Process

President Ghani and President Obama reaffirmed their shared commitment, reflected in the SPA and BSA, to closely cooperate in preventing terrorists from ever again using Afghan soil to threaten Afghanistan, the region, or the world. President Obama hailed the successful completion of the security transition, the end of the NATO-led combat mission, and Afghan forces taking the lead on, and full responsibility for, security throughout Afghanistan. The leaders also acknowledged the important continuing role of NATO's new Resolute Support Mission in supporting the further development of the ANDSF's capabilities.

Both Presidents saluted the courage and growing capability of Afghan security forces, including their success in securing the elections last year. The leaders joined in paying their respects to the families of Afghan soldiers and civilians who have been killed or injured in the 13-year war. President Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah also offered condolences to the families of American soldiers and civilians who were killed and injured while serving in Afghanistan, and on behalf of the Afghan people, expressed gratitude to the American people for their sacrifices and continued support.

Both sides agreed on an early formation of the Joint Commission to oversee the implementation of the BSA and President Obama affirmed ongoing U.S. support for Afghan security forces. Based on President Ghani's request for flexibility in the U.S. draw down timeline, the U.S. will maintain its current posture of 9,800 troops through the end of 2015. The specific trajectory of the 2016 U.S. troop drawdown will be established later in 2015 to enable the U.S. troop consolidation to a Kabul-based embassy presence by the end of 2016. This flexibility reflects the re-invigorated partnership with Afghanistan, which is aimed at making Afghanistan secure and preventing it from being used to launch terrorist attacks. Reconciliation and a political settlement remain the surest way to achieve the full retrograde of U.S. and foreign troops from Afghanistan in a way that safeguards international interests and peace in Afghanistan, as well as U.S. national security interests. Consistent with the principles of the SPA and BSA and as part of the broader bilateral security relationship, the two Presidents agreed to continue a dialogue on U.S. and Afghan counterterrorism (CT) objectives, to include the development of a joint CT partnership strategy through and beyond 2016.

While reaffirming their determination to cooperate against those who advocate violence and extremism, President Obama and President Ghani also stressed the need for an Afghan-led peace process, enjoying regional support, in particular from Pakistan, noting that as a part of the outcome of any such process, the Taliban and other armed opposition groups must end violence, break ties with international terrorist groups, and accept Afghanistan's constitution, including its protections for the rights of women and minorities. President Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah emphasized their mutual and strong determination to advance a reconciliation process based on these principles. President Obama reaffirmed strong U.S. support for an Afghan-led, Afghan-owned peace process and committed to make available additional financial support for the Afghan Peace and Reintegration Program (APRP) to facilitate the peaceful reintegration of former combatants into their local communities.

President Obama welcomed recent developments in Afghan-Pakistani relations. Both leaders emphasized the importance of continued efforts to advance Afghan-Pakistani dialogue aimed at building trust and producing tangible progress in the peace process, and improving the security situation in Afghanistan, Pakistan and the region at large.

Reinforcing Regional Security and Cooperation

The leaders called on all countries in the region to support Afghanistan's security, stability and prosperity. Both presidents endorsed efforts to deepen the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process and expressed appreciation to China for

hosting the October 2014 Heart of Asia summit and to Pakistan for hosting the next meeting later this year. President Obama welcomed steps by the National Unity Government to integrate Afghanistan more fully into the regional economy through various regional organizations, processes and programs and committed continued U.S. support for those efforts. President Ghani presented a development strategy built around regional connectivity, good governance, and investments for productivity. Central to this strategy is cooperation between Afghanistan and the region through trade, transit and investments. The two Presidents agreed to work to bring together like-minded countries to discuss Afghanistan and regional integration efforts at a high-level meeting on the margins of the 2015 United Nations General Assembly meeting.

Fostering Social and Economic Development

The leaders acknowledged the significant challenges Afghanistan is facing as it strives to overcome its current budgetary gap, and become increasingly economically and fiscally self-reliant. Emphasizing that economic reform is a central pillar of the National Unity Government's agenda, President Ghani briefed President Obama on specific steps the Afghan government is taking to combat corruption, increase transparency, reduce poverty and create jobs. President Ghani noted that in addition to many recent achievements, Afghanistan continues to face formidable challenges, including the need to root out corruption and strengthen good governance, build the foundation for sustainable and inclusive economic growth, increase regional connectivity, and address illicit drug production in Afghanistan. In support of these efforts, President Obama and President Ghani announced a New Development Partnership that would focus up to $800 million in U.S. economic assistance on urgent Afghan priorities tied to Afghan achievements of specific development results and implementation of key policy reforms. President Obama also welcomed the recent successful negotiation of an IMF Staff Monitored Program for Afghanistan. President Ghani committed to take action on all necessary steps needed to implement this program.

Both Presidents further welcomed the decision to resume regular meetings of the Trade and Investment Framework Agreement Council and the agreement to expand capacity-building cooperation between the U.S. Treasury Department and relevant Afghan government agencies as set forth in the agreement signed by Treasury Secretary Lew and Finance Minister Hakimi on March 23 at Camp David.

President Obama and President Ghani agreed that Afghan prosperity depended on the development of the country's human capital. To this end President Ghani reiterated the Afghan government's determination to educate all Afghan boys and girls. President Obama expressed U.S. intent to provide sustained support for education in Afghanistan. Noting the significant impact that educational and cultural exchanges have had on Afghan and American society, and the U.S. commitment in the SPA to promote such programs, President Obama announced the U.S. intention to increase the number of Fulbright fellowships available to qualified Afghan students by 50 percent for the next five years, making this one of the largest Fulbright programs in the world. In addition, President Obama announced the establishment of an $18 million USAID scholarship program to support women attending universities throughout Afghanistan. The two presidents also welcomed the decision of the Smithsonian Institution to host a major exhibition of contemporary Afghan handicrafts in 2016.

Strengthening Afghan Institutions and Governance

President Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah outlined the National Unity Government's efforts to improve government performance, effectiveness, efficiency, and combat corruption. They also underscored the National Unity Government's commitment to upholding the rule of law and reforming the judiciary. They stressed that restoring Afghan people's confidence in justice institutions is a top priority for the Afghan government. President Obama and President Ghani agreed on the importance of cooperating to provide justice

sector personnel with the skills and qualifications needed to counter narcotics, ensure safe and humane corrections, expand legal education, protect the rights of women and girls, and provide other essential justice services.

Conclusion

This visit constituted the first meeting among President Obama, President Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah since the inauguration of the National Unity Government last September and marked a pivotal moment in the U.S.-Afghan partnership. Looking back, it was an opportunity to review the remarkable strategic, political and economic achievements of this partnership and the successful completion of the security transition in Afghanistan. Looking forward, both presidents endorsed a vision of a sustained relationship rooted in shared values, interests and sacrifices, bound by mutual commitments enshrined in the U.S.-Afghanistan Enduring Strategic Partnership Agreement.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Memorandum on Disposal of Defense High-Level Radioactive Waste in a Separate Repository
March 24, 2015

Memorandum for the Secretary of Energy

Subject: Disposal of Defense High-Level Radioactive Waste in a Separate Repository

Your memorandum and accompanying report of January 9, 2015, analyze the factors enumerated in section 8 of the Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1982 (the "Act") concerning disposal of high-level radioactive waste resulting from atomic energy defense activities, conclude that a strong basis exists to find a separate repository is required pursuant to section 8 of the Act, and recommend that I make this finding.

In accordance with the Act, I find the development of a repository for the disposal of high-level radioactive waste resulting from atomic energy defense activities only is required.

BARACK OBAMA

Remarks Commemorating the Fifth Anniversary of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act
March 25, 2015

Thank you. Good job. Keep up the good work. Thank you. Thank you so much, everybody. Thank you. Thank you. Everybody, have a seat. Thank you, Doctor, for that introduction. I want to thank Sylvia Burwell, our outstanding head of Health and Human Services. We've got some wonderful Members of Congress here today who helped make this happen. And I want to offer a heartfelt thanks to all of the top medical professionals who are here today. We've got hospital leaders, we've got health care CEOs, doctors, patients, advocates, consumer groups, Democrats and Republicans, who've all come together and spent time and effort to make the Affordable Care Act, and America's health care system, work even better.

What your efforts have meant is the start of a new phase, where professionals like you and organizations like yours come together in one new network with one big goal, and that is to continue to improve the cost and quality of health care in America.

A lot of you have already taken steps on your own. The American Cancer Society that's represented here is committed to teaching its members about how new patient-centered approaches can improve cancer care. Governor

Markell of Delaware, who's here, has set a goal of having 80 percent of his citizens receive care through new and improved payment and delivery models within 5 years. And Dr. Glenn Madrid of Grand Junction, Colorado, is using a new care model that allowed him to hire case coordinators and use better technology so that patients have access to him 24/7. I don't know when that lets him sleep—[*laughter*]—but his patients are sleeping better.

And these are examples of efforts that show we don't need to reinvent the wheel; you're already figuring out what works to reduce infections in hospitals or help patients with complicated needs. What we have to do is to share these best practices, these good ideas, including new ways to pay for care so that we're rewarding quality. And that's what this network is all about.

In fact, just 5 years in, the Affordable Care Act has already helped improve the quality of health care across the board. A lot of the attention has been rightly focused on people's access to care, and that obviously was a huge motivator for us passing the Affordable Care Act: making sure that people who didn't have health insurance have the security of health insurance.

But what was also a central notion in the Affordable Care Act was, we had an inefficient system with a lot of waste that didn't also deliver the kind of quality that was needed, that often put health care providers in a box where they wanted to do better for their patients, but financial incentives were skewed the other way.

And so the work that we've been able to do is already spurring the kinds of changes that we had hoped for. It's helped reduce hospital readmission rates dramatically. It's a major reason why we've seen 50,000 fewer preventable patient deaths in hospitals. And if you want to know what that means, ask Alicia Cole, who suffers—Alicia is right here—who suffers the long-term effects of a hospital-acquired infection. And she is here today because she doesn't want anybody else to endure what she has. And it's preventable if we set up good practices and financial incentives, reimbursement incentives, are aligned with those best practices.

So making sure that the Affordable Care Act works as intended, to not only deliver access to care, but also to improve the quality of care and the cost of care, that's something that requires all of us to work together. That's part of what the law is all about. It's making health coverage more affordable and more effective for all of us. And in a lot of ways, it's working better than many of us, including me, anticipated. [*Laughter*]

Wherever you are, here's why you should care about making this system more efficient, and here's why you should care that we keep the Affordable Care Act in place. If you get insurance through your employer, like most Americans do, the ACA gave you new savings and new protections. If you've got a preexisting condition like diabetes or cancer, if you've had heartburn or a heart attack, this law means that you can no longer be charged more or denied coverage because of a preexisting condition—ever. It's the end of discrimination against the sick in America, and all of us are sick sometimes.

If you don't have health insurance, you can go online to the marketplace and choose from an array of quality, affordable private plans. Every Governor was given the option to expand Medicaid for his or her citizens, although only 28 have chosen to do so so far. But after 5 years of the ACA, more than 16 million uninsured Americans have gained health care coverage—16 million. In just over 1 year, the ranks of the uninsured have dropped by nearly one-third—one-third.

If you're a woman, you can no longer be charged more just for being a woman. And you know, there are a lot of women—[*laughter*]—like, more than 50 percent. [*Laughter*] Preventive care, like routine checkups and immunizations and contraception, now come with no additional out-of-pocket costs.

If you're a young person, you can now stay on your parent's plan until you turn 26. And if you want to turn that new idea into a business, if you're going to try different jobs, even a different career, you now have the freedom to do

it because you can buy health care that's portable and not tied to your employer. Most people have options that cost less than a hundred bucks a month.

If you're a business owner—because when we put forward the Affordable Care Act, there was a lot of question about how it would affect business—well, it turns out, employer premiums rose at a rate tied for the lowest on record. If premiums had kept growing at the rate we saw in the last decade, then either the average family premium, paid by the family or paid by the business, would be $1,800 higher than it is today. That's 1,800 bucks that businesses can use to higher and invest, or that's 1,800 bucks that stays in that family's bank account, shows up in their paycheck.

If you're a senior, more than 9 million seniors and people with disabilities have saved an average of $1,600 on their prescriptions, adding up to over $15 billion in savings. There were fears promoted that somehow this was going to undermine Medicare. Well, it turns out, the life of the Medicare Trust Fund has been extended by 13 years since this law has passed.

And, relevant to the topic today, we're moving Medicare toward a payment model that rewards quality of care instead of quantity of care. We don't want the incentives to be skewed so that providers feel obliged to do more tests, we want them to do the right tests. We want them, perhaps, to save—to invest some money on the front end to prevent disease and not just on the back end to treat disease. And so these changes are encouraging doctors and hospitals to focus on getting better outcomes for their patients.

As we speak, Congress is working to fix the Medicare physician payment system. I've got my pen ready to sign a good, bipartisan bill, which would be really exciting. I love when Congress passes bipartisan bills—[*laughter*]—that I can sign. It's always very encouraging. And I want to thank everybody here today for their work in supporting new models of care that will benefit all Americans.

But the bottom line is this for the American people: The Affordable Care Act, this law, is saving money for families and for businesses. This law is also saving lives, lives that touch all of us. It's working despite countless attempts to repeal, undermine, defund, and defame this law.

It's not the "job killer" that critics have warned about for 5 years. When this law was passed, our business—our businesses began the longest streak of private-sector job growth on record: 60 straight months, 5 straight years, 12 million new jobs.

It's not the fiscal disaster critics warned about for 5 years. Health care prices are rising at the slowest rate in nearly 50 years, which has helped cut our deficit by two-thirds since I took office. Before the ACA, health care was the single biggest driver driving up our projected deficits. Today, health care is the single biggest factor driving those projections down.

I mean, we have been promised a lot of things these past 5 years that didn't turn out to be the case: death panels, doom—[*laughter*]—a serious alternative from Republicans in Congress. [*Laughter*]

The budget they introduced last week would literally double the number of the uninsured in America. And in their defense, there are two reasons why coming up with their own alternative has proven to be difficult.

First, it's because the Affordable Care Act pretty much was their plan before I'd adopted it—[*laughter*]—based on conservative, market-based principles developed by the Heritage Foundation and supported by Republicans in Congress and deployed by a guy named Mitt Romney in Massachusetts to great effect. If they want to take credit for this law, they can. I am happy to share it. [*Laughter*]

And second, it's because health reform is really hard, and the people here who are in the trenches know that. Good people from both parties have tried and failed to get it done for 100 years, because every public policy has some tradeoffs, especially when it affects one-sixth of the American economy and applies to the very personal needs of every individual American.

And we've made our share of mistakes since we passed this law. But we also know beyond a

shred of a doubt that the policy has worked. Coverage is up. Cost growth is at a historic low. Deficits have been slashed. Lives have been saved. So if anybody wants to join us in the spirit of the people who have put aside differences to come here today and help make the law work even better, come on board.

On the other hand, for folks who are basing their entire political agenda on repealing the law, you've got to explain how kicking millions of families off their insurance is somehow going to make us more free. Or why forcing millions of families to pay thousands of dollars more will somehow make us more secure. Or why we should go back to the days when women paid more for coverage than men or a preexisting condition locked so many of us out of insurance.

And if that's your argument, then you should meet somebody like Anne Ha, who is here. Anne is 28 years old. Where's Anne? There you are. Anne runs her own business in Philadelphia. And she thought what many of us think when we're young—I no longer qualify—[*laughter*]—that she was too young, too healthy to bother with health insurance. She went to the gym every day. She ate healthy, looks great, felt invincible. Why pay a doctor just to tell her she's okay?

But then her mom called, as moms sometimes do, and told Anne to get insured against the "what ifs" of life. What if you get sick? What if you get into a car accident? So Anne, dutiful daughter that she was, went to healthcare.gov, checked out her options in the marketplace. And thanks to the tax credits available to her under this law, she got covered for 85 bucks a month. Four months later, Anne was diagnosed with early-stage stomach cancer. Anne underwent surgery, endured chemo. Today, she's recovering. She looks great. She's here with us at the White House. She invited me to her wedding. I told her you don't want the President at her wedding. [*Laughter*]

"If I didn't have insurance," Anne wrote, "my stomach cancer would have gone undiscovered, slowly and silently killing me. But because I did have insurance, I was given a chance to live a long and happy life."

And so in September, Anne is going to be marrying her fiancé Tom. And she's convinced him to get covered too. And I do appreciate, Michelle appreciates, the invitation. As I said, we have to mag people, if you—at the wedding, and it spoils the fun. [*Laughter*]

But here are two lessons from Anne's story. Number one, listen to your mom. [*Laughter*] Number two, the Affordable Care Act works. And it's working not just to make sure that folks like Anne get coverage, but it's also working to make sure that the system as a whole is providing better quality at a better price, freeing up our providers to do the things that led them to get into health care in the first place, and that's help people. It works.

Five years ago, we declared that in the United States of America, the security of quality, affordable health care was a privilege—was not a privilege, but a right. And today, we've got citizens all across the country, all of you here today who are helping make that right a reality for every American, regardless of your political beliefs or theirs. And we're saving money in the process. And we're cutting the deficit in the process. And we're helping businesses in their bottom lines in the process. We're making this country more competitive in the process.

And it's not going to happen overnight. There are still all kinds of bumps along the way. This is—health care is complicated stuff. And the hospital executives who are here and the doctors who are here and the consumer advocates who are here can tell you, all the complications and the quirks not just to the Affordable Care Act, but just generally making the system more rational and more efficient, it takes some time. But we're on our way. We're making progress.

And if all of us summon the same focus, the same kind of courage and wisdom and hard work that so many of you in this room display, and if we keep working not against one another, but for one another, with one another, we will not just make progress in health care. We're going to keep on making sure that across the board, we're living up to our highest ideals.

So I very much am appreciative of what all of you are doing. I'm very proud of you. And why don't you guys get back to work? [*Laughter*] Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:42 a.m. in the South Court Auditorium of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Nancy Beran, chief medical officer and internist, Westchester Health; Los Angeles, CA, resident Alicia Cole; and former Gov. W. Mitt Romney of Massachusetts.

Remarks Following a Roundtable Discussion on Trade
March 25, 2015

Well, as I said in the State of the Union Address earlier this year, my top priority is to make sure that we continue the economic momentum that's been established, continue to grow businesses, create jobs, and make sure that we've got the kind of prosperity that is broad based and allows people not just to get into the middle class, but ultimately, to start their own businesses, start their own industries, in some cases, climb out of difficult circumstances and live out the American Dream.

And one of the major components to do that is to make sure that outstanding goods and services made right here in the United States of America have access to global markets. Ninety-five percent of the customers of the world are outside our borders, and we've got to make sure that we're able to sell to them. And when we do, our companies thrive.

This is one of the reasons why I am pursuing the kind of trade authority that allows me, working with Members of Congress, to pry open these markets and make sure there's a level playing field that's good for American businesses and American workers.

We already have one of the most open markets in the world. People are already selling to us. But oftentimes, it's not reciprocal. And what I want to do is make sure that those markets are as open to us, our businesses, American workers, American products, as our markets are open to them.

And one of the reasons that I brought this group together is because the perception sometimes is, is that the trade agenda is only important for big companies, big corporations, big Fortune 500 or 100 companies. Well, the group that's sitting around here is made up of small-businesspeople or medium-sized businesspeople who are seeing their businesses directly benefit from export, as well as a couple mayors, Mayor Nutter and Mayor Buckhorn, Philadelphia and Tampa, respectively, who can account for hundreds of thousands of jobs and tens of billions of dollars of sales coming out of their region as a consequence of exports.

So among the companies here, we've got companies that range from four employees to a couple hundred employees. Some are selling as much as 20 percent of their products and goods outside the United States; some are just getting started and are selling 7, 8, 10 percent of their goods outside the United States. In each case, what they know is that if the U.S. Government is getting their back, making sure that there's a level playing field, they can compete.

So I—just to tell one quick story: Jeff Hohman from Northwest Door makes big garage doors. And what he's finding is, is that when you have that stamp, "Made in America," on it, customers like that, they value it, and there's a ready market out there. And because he's been able to sell in places like Saudi Arabia and Australia, he's been able to hire more workers. Because his sales, traditionally, had gone down during the wintertime when people aren't thinking about buying a new garage door. They want to keep the one they've got closed. [*Laughter*] And so it was—there was a seasonal business cycle. Well, it turns out that when it's winter here, it's summer in Australia, and he's able to keep more folks on the job and, in fact, hire more people because of those sales and those opportunities.

Steve Basta with AlterG has created—or has a company that's created new technologies for medical rehabilitation. He's able to sell his products overseas, but what he's finding is, in some countries, you've got tariffs that make his products more expensive, and that means fewer sales.

And so this is not just the Boeings and the General Electrics that benefit, although they do benefit, and they've got a lot of suppliers up and down the chain, so small and medium-sized businesses benefit when the big companies are selling, because they're sourcing here in the United States. But it's also small businesses and medium-sized businesses directly benefit.

And I want to make sure that that story gets told, because we're going to make a big push to level the playing field. And I know that sometimes there's controversy around trade agendas. Trade deals have not always been good for American manufacturing. There have been times where because the trade deal was one way, American workers didn't benefit and somebody else did. Well, we intend to change that. We're not going to sit and settle for the status quo.

And that's why we're going to make sure that the trade deals of the future reflect the labor protections, the environment protections, the protection of property—or intellectual property that's so important to our businesses. But we're going to pry those markets open. I'm not going to settle for the status quo, because we think we can grow enormously.

And what we know is that people who export, their workers tend to get higher wages. Those businesses do better. And we want to make sure that "Made in America" is showing up in every country around the world. That's our goal.

And I appreciate very much the mayors who are here who, as Michael Nutter said, doesn't have time for a lot of abstract, ideological debates. What they know is, they want to make sure their businesses are able to access these markets.

You've got—Mayor Buckhorn has got the port in Tampa, which is the gateway for the entire southern part of our hemisphere. They know we've got to get this done. And so do these businesses as well.

So thank you very much, everybody. Appreciate it.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:36 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Jeff Hohman, president, Northwest Door; and Steve Basta, chief executive officer, AlterG, Inc.

Remarks at a Roundtable Discussion on Financial Regulatory Reform and Consumer Financial Protection at Lawson State Community College in Birmingham, Alabama
March 26, 2015

Well, it's wonderful to be here at Lawson State Community College. I want to thank Dr. Ward for his hospitality. We're going to end up addressing a much larger crowd, but I wanted to take time while I was here to have a chance to talk to some people who are extraordinarily active here in Alabama around the issue of payday lending, title lending, and frankly, predatory lending.

Here in Alabama, like in many parts of the country, including my home city of Chicago, a lot of folks will come across some difficult times. Occasionally, something happens, somebody gets sick in the family, although, now they've got the Affordable Care Act—[*laughter*]—hopefully, to fall back on. The car may break down at a bad time; a child may need something. And if things are tight—and many of these communities don't have traditional banking services—too often, they get steered into payday loans.

And the challenge is that the interest rates that are so often charged on these short-term loans, they can be as high as 400 percent, 450

percent interest. It means that a $500 loan might require $1,000 in interest on top of the loan.

And I just was hearing a story from Stephen here about a family whose grandmother dies, and they take out a small loan for the funeral, aren't able to pay it back right away, lose their car, and two members of the family then lose their job, and the entire family's financial situation collapses. That's not who we are. That's not who we should be as a country.

And the good news is that the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau that was set up under Wall Street reform announced today that they're going to be initiating regulations to make sure that we're adhering to a basic principle, which is if we're going to have financial institutions provide loans to families and individuals, they've got to make sure that these individuals have the capacity to pay them back, that they're not going to be on the hook and burdened in perpetuity as a consequence of what was a short-term problem. We don't want that translated then into a long-term financial crisis for these families.

It's something that we know States around the country have been able to do, but unfortunately, too many States have not yet taken these steps. By having a Federal rule through the Consumer Finance Protection Bureau, we're going to be able to make sure that more and more people get more protection. And in the meantime, these outstanding folks who are sitting around the table are going to continue to push efforts at the State level to try to make progress.

And it's important to note that this is not a partisan issue. There are Republicans as well as Democrats who care deeply about this issue. There are members of the faith community who see a biblical injunction—[*laughter*]—in not engaging in usury and taking advantage of people at moments where they're most vulnerable. And so we very much appreciate both the Democrats and Republicans here in the State of Alabama who are promoting State-based solutions.

In the meantime, we're going to make sure that we continue to promote solutions at the Federal level as well. And I'm very proud of the Consumer Finance Protection Bureau for promulgating these rules. There's going to be a comment period. There's going to be a lengthy debate. But I'm going to be on the side of making sure that these rules are as strong as possible.

Okay? Thank you, very much. Did I miss anything? [*Laughter*] Thank you, people.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:14 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Perry W. Ward, president, Lawson State Community College; and Stephen Stetson, policy analyst, Arise Citizens' Policy Project.

Remarks at Lawson State Community College in Birmingham
March 26, 2015

The President. Hello, Alabama! Hello, Lawson State Community College! Well, it's good to be here. Thank you so much.

Audience member. We love you, Mr. President!

The President. I love you back! I do! Thank you. Everybody, have a seat. Have a seat. I'm going to talk for a second. Can everybody—everybody, please give Ollie a big round of applause, please. I felt a little bad because Ollie said "a man who needs no introduction," so I started walking out. [*Laughter*] Then, it turned out, she had a little introduction. [*Laughter*] But it is wonderful to be here.

Let me just say, first of all, thank you to Dr. Ward, who is not only your president; we named him a White House "Champion of Change" for the very great work he's done here at Lawson State. We've got two outstanding public servants here as well. Congresswoman Terri Sewell is here. Where's Terri? I don't even see her.

Audience member. Over here!

The President. There she is. She's way over there. And your mayor, William Bell, is in the house.

So I'm here, Birmingham, to just acknowledge that I didn't have UAB making it out of the first round. [*Laughter*]

Audience members. Oooh! [*Laughter*]

The President. My bracket is so busted. [*Laughter*] But, UAB, that's a great accomplishment. I want to congratulate them. It's also great to be with students like those here at Lawson State, at community colleges. I'm proud of all of you. I'm proud of you making this investment in yourselves. What you're doing takes effort and persistence. And it takes faith in the idea that no matter how you started, no matter where you come from, no matter what ZIP Code you were born in, in America, if you work hard, you can get ahead.

I think it was yesterday I saw a story where someone said that a visit from the President is a "potential game changer" for the neighborhood. I don't know if just one visit is a game changer, but it's nice to be with you. The real game changers for any neighborhood, for any community, are the people there, the folks who, day in, day out, are doing the work and raising families and participating in the community through their churches and faith institutions, are trying to provide that optimism and that lift.

And the young people who are here, you're the game changers, because what you're studying and your ability to then apply that learning, that's going to make a difference. The love we put into our families and our communities every day and embracing the joys of citizenship and participation, that's what is a game changer. That's what makes a difference.

Now, I won't deny, I can help a little bit. [*Laughter*] I can maybe make a little bit of difference. And today I want to talk about what we can do as a country to reward hard work and keep the economy growing and make sure that new jobs and opportunities exist.

The good news is, right now we're on a 60-month streak of private sector job creation. Sixty months, so that's 5 years. That's a long time. We've created 12 million new jobs. Nationwide, the unemployment rate has fallen. When I came into office, that first year it was 10 percent; now it's 5.5 percent. There are more job openings than at any time since 2001.

Meanwhile, our high school graduation rate is up, at an alltime high. More than 16 million Americans have gained the security of health insurance. We're producing more energy than ever before: oil and gas, but also wind power and solar power. And meanwhile, lower gas prices should save the typical family this year about $700 at the pump. And the good news is, wages are even on the rise again, and that's going to help a lot of families.

So it's been a long, hard road. But thanks to the hard work of the American people, America is coming back. So the question now is, where do we go from here? Do we accept an economy where just a few people do really, really well? Or are we going to keep building an economy that generates opportunity for everybody who's willing to work?

And what I believe is, is that America does best when the middle class does better. And when ordinary folks who maybe were born into poverty are able to climb their way into the middle class, that's good for everybody. The economy grows best not from the top down, but from the bottom up and from the middle out.

So what we've been pushing is what I call middle class economics, the idea that the country does best when everybody has got a fair shot, and everybody is doing their fair share, everybody is playing by the same rules. And we want not only everybody to share in America's success, but contribute to it, because we know that if you field the team and only half the folks get to play, that team will be less successful. If everybody is playing a part, that team is going to be more successful.

So what does middle class economics mean in this new economy? It means that every American has to have the tools to get ahead in a fast-paced, constantly changing global economy. That means that we've got to make sure that working families feel more secure; that their paychecks can go a little farther; that they're getting things like paid leave and childcare not as luxuries, but because they help

support families; that we treat those things as priorities for working moms and working dads.

It's time to follow the example of States and cities and companies that are raising America's minimum wage. That will make a difference. It means preparing Americans to earn good jobs and higher wages, which means every child getting a great education at the earliest age. Making college more affordable so young people can afford to go to college without getting burdened with debt.

It means working with businesses to provide apprenticeships and on-the-job training and other paths into the middle class. And I want to bring down the cost of community college to zero. Two years of community college should be as free and universal as high school is today. If we've got the best trained workforce in the world, then businesses will come to Alabama. They'll come to Birmingham. They'll come to America. And we will succeed.

Middle class economics means building the most competitive economy anywhere so we can keep churning out high-wage jobs for the workers to fill. I want to put more people back to work rebuilding our roads and our bridges, modern ports, faster trains, faster Internet. We should invest in those things. They pay off many times over.

I want to invest in basic research so that jobs and industries of the future take root here because we've invented new products and new services and innovated. And we can pay for these investments without blowing up our deficits. We just need to reform our Tax Code so it helps middle class families get ahead instead of letting folks who've already got a lot get ahead.

And I have to say, these ideas are not about ideology. The reason I've proposed these ideas is because we know they work.

Now, let me talk about Washington for a second. [*Laughter*] Let me just talk about Washington for a second. The good news is that today the House of Representatives passed a bill. [*Laughter*] No, no. I—you think I'm joking. I'm not. [*Laughter*] It was a bipartisan bill designed to make sure that doctors in our Medicare system get paid on time, that the Children's Health Insurance Program continues to work.

I called the Speaker, John Boehner, and the Democratic leader, Nancy Pelosi, and I said, congratulations, this is how Congress is supposed to work. They came together; they compromised. They had a good idea. They didn't get everything they wanted. They passed a bill. Now the Senate, hopefully, will pass the bill, and I'll get to sign it, and the American people will be better off for it. And I thought, this is great. Let's do more of this. Let's make it happen.

I—so I want to give John Boehner and Nancy Pelosi credit. They did good work today. And they deserve credit, and the House of Representatives deserves credit for that.

So that was the good news. [*Laughter*] The bad news—[*laughter*]—is the Republicans in Congress unveiled their budget, and it represents the opposite of middle class economics, because it would hand out new tax cuts for millionaires and billionaires, let taxes go up for students and working families because it would eliminate their tax credits on a variety of things. It would cut investments in education to the lowest level since the year 2000. It would double the number of Americans without health insurance.

And so you look at it and you say, what are you trying to solve with this budget? They say the reason they wanted this budget is because we've got to do this to eliminate deficits and debt. Now, keep in mind, the deficit has come down by two-thirds since I've been President. It's come down by two-thirds. So—and the budget I put forward would continue to keep deficits low.

But let's take them at their word. They said they wanted to reduce the deficit. Before the ink was even dry on the budget that they put forward—that was already full of tax cuts for folks at the top—they rolled out their next big economic plan, which was another huge tax cut for folks at the top. This one would cost $250 billion. It would apply only to the top one-tenth of 1 percent of Americans.

In Alabama, this new tax cut they're proposing—[*laughter*]—I've got to laugh because it

would average $2 million per person in tax cuts, and it would apply to less than 50 people per year here in Alabama.

Audience members. Oooh!

The President. So 50 people would get an average tax break of $2 million. Not 50,000 people—50.

Audience member. "Fiddy."

The President. "Fiddy." [*Laughter*]

Now—[*laughter*]—what would lead you—when you're saying you're concerned about the deficits, what would lead you to put in your budget and then propose right after your budget something like that? I mean, did they look at the budget? They already got tax cuts for the wealthy, for millionaires and billionaires, and then they say, you know what we forgot to put in here? Another deficit-busting tax cut for the top one-tenth of 1 percent of Americans. That's what's really going to move the country forward. Is that what they were thinking? I guess. [*Laughter*]

I don't think our top economic priority should be helping a tiny number of Americans who are already doing really, really well, and then asking everybody else to foot the bill. And keep in mind, I—one of the things about being President, you meet people from all walks of life. You meet folks with very modest incomes. You meet the wealthiest people in the world. And let me just say, some of the—these folks at the very top, the top one-tenth of 1 percent, are wonderful people. Warren Buffett is a great friend of mine. They've done amazing things. They've invested. They've created businesses. They deserve great success. But they really don't need a tax cut. [*Laughter*]

And if you talk to them, they'll tell you: "I've already got a couple planes. I've already got a boat." [*Laughter*] "I've already got five or six houses. I'm okay." [*Laughter*] And the idea that you would do it at the same time as you're eliminating tax credits for students or working families—that doesn't make sense.

Our top priority should be helping everybody who works hard get ahead. It doesn't mean everybody is going to be equal. It doesn't mean that we're going to punish people who have started businesses and taken risks. They should be rewarded. But we want to make sure everybody has a chance to do okay if they're working hard.

And that brings me to one of the main reasons that I'm here in Birmingham today. One of the main ways to make sure paychecks to go farther is to make sure working families don't get ripped off. [*Applause*] Right? And that's why we've taken action to protect Americans from financial advisers who don't necessarily have the interests of their clients at heart. That's why we've taken steps to protect student borrowers from unaffordable debt. We want them to know before they owe. [*Laughter*]

It's why, 5 years ago, we passed historic Wall Street reform to end this era of "too big to fail," where banks on Wall Street, some of them would make reckless bets, and then everybody else would have to clean up after them. And why we've been working to protect people so that they understand mortgages and they don't buy homes they can't afford and end up in a situation not only hurting themselves, but hurting the financial system.

And that's why, as part of this reform, we created an independent consumer watchdog with just one mission, and that is to look out for all of you. And it's called the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, or CFPB. Now, these folks, the CFPB, it hasn't been around a long time, but because of the work they've done—it's not a big agency, but they've already put over $5 billion back into the pockets of more than 15 million families. Because they've taken on unfair lending practices and unscrupulous mortgage brokers. And they've gotten refunds for folks and are working with State and local officials to make sure that people are protected when it comes to their finances. Because if you work hard, you shouldn't be taken advantage of.

And today they're taking new steps towards cracking down on some of the most abusive practices involving payday loans and title loans.

Now, Ollie was talking about this in a very personal way. I want to just break this down for folks. Every year, millions of Americans take out these payday loans. Here in Alabama, there are four times as many payday lending stores as there are McDonald's. Think about that.

Because there are a lot of McDonald's. [*Laughter*] There are four times as many payday loan operations here in Alabama as there are McDonald's.

Now, what they'll say, the folks who run these things—in theory, what they'll say is these loans help you deal with a one-time expense. So your car breaks down, you got to get to work; you go there, cash a check real quick or get a quick loan, and then that's the end of it. In reality, most payday loans aren't taken out for one-time expenses. They're taken out to pay for previous loans. You borrow money to pay for the money you already borrowed.

As Ollie will tell you, before you know it, you find yourselves trapped in a cycle of debt. At first, it seems like easy money. But the average borrower ends up spending about 200 days out of the year in debt. You take out a $500 loan at the rates that they're charging in these payday loans—some cases, 450 percent interest—you wind up paying more than $1,000 in interest and fees on the $500 that you borrowed.

We were hearing a story from some of the advocates who were working here in Alabama, a story about a family, the grandmother died, matriarch of the family. She passed away. They don't have quite enough to pay for the funeral. They go to a payday loan, borrow for the funeral, can't pay back the loan in time. The family's car gets taken away. And the two folks who are the breadwinners in that family lose their jobs because they can't get to work. Right? So what started off as a short-term emergency suddenly becomes a catastrophic financial situation for that family.

And you don't need to be a math genius to know that it's a pretty bad deal if you're borrowing $500 and you have to pay back $1,000 in interest. [*Laughter*]

So I just met with faith leaders and consumer advocates and civil rights leaders here in Alabama who are coming together to change that. And I want to say that this is a bipartisan effort. You've got some very conservative folks here in Alabama who recognize—they're reading their Bible, they're saying, well, that ain't right. [*Laughter*] Right? I mean, they—they're saying the Bible is not wild about somebody charging $1,000 worth of interest on a $500 loan. Because it feels like you're taking advantage of somebody. If you're lending to somebody, knowing they can't pay you back, and you're going to put them on the hook and just squeeze them harder and harder and harder and take more and more money out of them, you're taking advantage of them.

And so I'm very proud of the bipartisan effort here in Alabama to try to change this. But I want everybody to know, they're not going to have to fight alone. Because at the Federal level, the Consumer Finance Protection Bureau, the CFPB, announced today that it's going to take important steps towards protecting consumers from getting stuck into these cycles of debt.

And the idea is pretty common sense: If you lend out money, you have to first make sure that the borrower can afford to pay it back. Don't lend somebody money if you know they can't pay it back.

As Americans, we don't mind seeing folks make a profit. And if somebody lends you money, then you—we expect you to charge interest on that loan. But if you're making that profit by trapping hard-working Americans into a vicious cycle of debt, you've got to find a new business model. You've got to find a new way of doing business.

So this is just one more way that America's new consumer watchdog is making sure more of your paycheck stays in your pocket. And in the meantime, we're also going to be working to educate folks on how to think about their money.

We were talking to Dr. Ward, and through the community college process, through consumer advocates at the local level, in the high schools, we need to be teaching young people the dangers of taking out too much consumer debt.

And this is one more way that Wall Street reform—what we passed 5 years ago—is protecting working families and taxpayers. And that strengthens the economy.

And that's one more reason why it makes no sense that the Republican budget would make it harder for the CFPB to do its job and would

allow Wall Street to go back to the kind of recklessness that led to the crisis in the first place and would allow these kinds of lenders who are not doing the right thing keep at it.

I have to be clear: If Republicans in Congress send me a bill that unravels the reforms we've put in place, if they send me a bill that unravels Wall Street reform, I will veto it. And this is not about politics. It's about basic values of honesty and fair play. It's about the basic bargain that says, here in America, hard work should pay off, responsibility should be rewarded.

One of the people who I met with was Reverend Shannon Webster of Birmingham's First Presbyterian Church. Where's pastor? He's here somewhere. There he is, in the back. Stand up so everybody can see you. So Pastor Webster is one of the pastors leading the effort to protect consumers here in Alabama. And at a public hearing a few years ago, he explained why he decided to work on this issue. "When our people are trapped in debt," he said, "they cannot escape, and we're all hurt." We're all hurt. And that's a simple statement, but it captures so much of what it means to be an American.

We are a country of rugged individuals. We don't expect folks to give us a handout. We expect people to work hard. We expect that hard work to be rewarded. If you're out there and you're working hard and starting a business and doing the right thing and looking after your family and not spending beyond yours means, we—folks like that shouldn't be punished or expected to pay for everybody else. We expect everybody to be responsible.

But we're also our brother's keeper. We're also our sister's keeper. We're also a country that was built on the idea that everybody gets a fair shot and that we put laws in place to make sure that folks aren't taken advantage of. When this country does not live up to its promise of fairness and opportunity for all people, we're all hurt. When we do live up to those promises, all of us are better off.

Back in 2008, I came to Birmingham as a candidate for this office, and I said, "There is nothing we cannot do if the American people decide it's time." Seven years later, I still believe there is nothing we cannot do if we decide it is time. We're all in this thing together, Alabama. We've been through some tough times together, but we're coming back together. If we decide this is our time, then together, we're going to write the next great chapter in this country's history. We're going to do it not just because I came to town, but because of the wonderful people in this town who are already making it happen.

Thank you, Alabama. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:27 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Ollie Parham, economic development chair, Alabama National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; Adam Ganucheau, reporter, Birmingham News; and Warren E. Buffett, chief executive officer and chairman, Berkshire Hathaway Inc. He also referred to H.R. 2.

Remarks During a Meeting With Members of the President's Council of Advisers on Science and Technology
March 27, 2015

I'm having an opportunity to meet with my science and technology advisory group, which has—works on an ongoing basis on a whole range of technology and science and research issues. And we're joined by a couple of Cabinet members, Secretary Burwell and Secretary Vilsack.

The reason I called you guys in here today before the meeting is, I wanted to talk about an issue that is of great importance to America's public health and the world's public health, and that is some of the problems that we're having in antibiotics becoming less effective and the need for us to deal with these drug-resistant bacteria.

This is a major public health issue. Some of you may have been reading and hearing

recently about the problem. Drug-resistant bacteria are one of the most serious public health issues that we face today. They cause tens of thousands of deaths, millions of illnesses, and that's just in the United States. And the numbers are sure to climb unless we take some very clear, concrete, and coordinated action.

Last year, I issued an Executive order directing agencies across the Government to create a national action plan for combating antibiotic-resistant bacteria. And today we are releasing that plan. John, give me the plan. [*Laughter*] Just so we have a little prop. [*Laughter*]

This is a product of extraordinary work from some of our top scientists and the private sector, research universities, and practitioners, doctors, and health professionals so that we can figure out how do we approach this problem. It is detailed, it is realistic, it covers the next five years, starting right now.

We've set some aggressive goals. First, we're going to slow the emergence of resistant bacteria and prevent the spread of resistant infections. Second, we're going to include surveillance; we want to know when it's happening and why it's happening. Third, we're going to develop better diagnostic tools. Fourth, we're going to accelerate research into new drugs. And fifth, we're going to improve global coordination, because this is going to end up being a global problem.

Last year, I also called for the creation of an Advisory Council for Combating Antibiotic-Resistant Bacteria to advise me and future Presidents on how to see this mission through, because this is not something that we'll solve just in the next 20 or 22 months. Starting today, we're officially taking nominations for that Council.

The budget that I released earlier this year nearly doubles the investment in fighting antibiotic resistance. This plan spells out exactly where the money would go. So I'm going to be urging Congress to pass a budget that will ultimately help save lives. We can't do this without Congress. But to—in order for us to get it done we're also going to have to educate the public. And this is one of those problems that doesn't always rise to the top of people's day-to-day concerns until somebody in their family is impacted. We take antibiotics for granted for a lot of illnesses that can be deadly or debilitating, and we're extraordinarily fortunate to have been living in a period where our antibiotics work.

If we start seeing those medicines diminish in effectiveness, we're going to have problems. And part of the solution here is not just finding replacements for traditional antibiotics; it's also making sure that we're using antibiotics properly, because part of the problem is that a lot of times we overdiagnose them. They're entering into our food chain through livestock. There are a whole range of reasons why bacteria is becoming more and more resistant to our traditional treatments.

And this is something that we have to take seriously now and invest in now. If we do, then I'm confident we're going to be able to deal with this effectively. If we don't, if we put this off, this is going to be a major public health problem, and it will be a lot harder to solve.

So all right? Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:25 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to John P. Holdren, Director, White House Office of Science and Technology Policy.

Statement on Senator Harry M. Reid's Decision Not To Seek Reelection
March 27, 2015

Harry Reid is a fighter. In his five terms as a U.S. Senator, Harry has fought for good jobs, a safer environment for our kids, and affordable health care for all. He's never backed down from a tough decision or been afraid to choose what is right over what is easy. Time and time again, Harry stood up to special interests and made sure every one of

his constituents had a voice in their Nation's Capital.

Above all else, Harry has fought for the people of his beloved State of Nevada. The son of a miner and a maid from the tiny town of Searchlight, he never forgot where he came from, and he never stopped working to give everyone who works hard the same shot at success that he had.

As the leader of the Senate Democrats during my time in office, Harry has become not only an ally, but a friend. I'm proud of all we have accomplished together, and I know the Senate will not be the same without him. I look forward to working with him to keep fighting for every American over the next 2 years, and Michelle and I wish him and Landra well in whatever the future holds.

Joint Statement by President Obama and President Enrique Peña Nieto of Mexico on United States-Mexico Climate Policy Cooperation
March 27, 2015

On the occasion of Mexico submitting its Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), President Barack Obama and President Enrique Peña Nieto reaffirm their commitment to addressing global climate change, one of the greatest threats facing humanity. The leaders underscore the importance of jointly addressing climate in their integrated economy. Smart action on climate change and developing clean energy can drive economic growth, and bring broad security, health, and development benefits to the region. The two countries will seize every opportunity to harmonize their efforts and policies towards their common climate goals. The two countries will launch a new high-level bilateral clean energy and climate policy task force to further deepen policy and regulatory coordination in specific areas including clean electricity, grid modernization, appliance standards, and energy efficiency, as well as promoting more fuel efficient automobile fleets in both countries, global and regional climate modeling, weather forecasting and early alerts system. The interagency task force will be chaired by Secretary Ernest Moniz and Secretary Juan José Guerra Abud, and hold its first meeting this spring. The task force will also look to advance its work program through the Clean Energy Ministerial that Mexico is hosting on May 27–28 and related initiatives. Both countries also commit to enhanced cooperation on air quality and climate policy, including harmonization and implementation of heavy-duty diesel and light duty emission standards, common programs to reduce reliance on HFCs, and technical cooperation on black carbon.

NOTE: The joint statement referred to Secretary of Environment and Natural Resources Juan José Guerra Abud of Mexico. An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

The President's Weekly Address
March 28, 2015

Hi, everybody. Five years ago, after the worst financial crisis in decades, we passed historic Wall Street reform to end the era of bailouts and too big to fail. As part that reform, we created an independent Consumer Financial Protection Bureau with one mission: to protect American consumers from some of the worst practices in the financial industry.

They've already put $5 billion back in the pockets of more than 15 million families. And this week, they took an important first step towards cracking down on some of the most abusive practices involving payday loans. Millions

of Americans take out these loans every year. In Alabama, where I visited this week, there are four times as many payday lending stores as there are McDonald's. But while payday loans might seem like easy money, folks often end up trapped in a cycle of debt. If you take out a $500 loan, it's easy to wind up paying more than $1,000 in interest and fees.

The step the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau announced this week is designed to change that. The idea is pretty common sense: If you're a payday lender preparing to give a loan, you should make sure that the borrower can afford to pay it back first. As Americans, we believe there's nothing wrong with making a profit. But there is something wrong with making that profit by trapping hard-working men and women in a vicious cycle of debt.

Protecting working Americans' paychecks shouldn't be a partisan issue. But the budget Republicans unveiled last week would make it harder, not easier, to crack down on financial fraud and abuse. And this week, when Republicans rolled out their next economic idea, it had nothing to do with the middle class. It was a new, more than $250 billion tax cut for the top one-tenth of the top 1 percent of Americans. That would mean handing out an average tax cut of $4 million a year to just 4,000 Americans per year and leaving the rest of the country to pay for it.

I don't think our top economic priority should be helping a tiny number of Americans who are already doing extraordinarily well and asking everybody else to foot the bill. I think our top priority should be helping everybody who works hard get ahead. This country does best when everyone gets their fair shot, everyone does their fair share, and everyone plays by the same set of rules. That's what middle class economics is all about, and as long as I'm your President, that's what I'll keep on fighting to do.

Thanks, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 2:20 p.m. on March 27 in the Map Room at the White House for broadcast on March 28. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 27, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on March 28.

Remarks at the Dedication of the Edward M. Kennedy Institute for the United States Senate in Boston, Massachusetts
March 30, 2015

Thank you very much. Please, have a seat. Thank you. Thank you so much. To Vicki, Ted, Patrick, Curran, Caroline, Ambassador Smith, members of the Kennedy family: Thank you so much for inviting me to speak today. Your Eminence Cardinal O'Malley; Vice President Biden; Governor Baker; Mayor Walsh; members of Congress, past and present; and pretty much every elected official in Massachusetts—[*laughter*]—it is an honor to mark this occasion with you.

Boston, know that Michelle and I have joined our prayers with yours these past few days for a hero, former Army Ranger and Boston Police Officer John Moynihan, who was shot in the line of duty on Friday night. I mention him because, last year, at the White House, the Vice President and I had the chance to honor Officer Moynihan as one of America's "Top Cops" for his bravery in the line of duty, for risking his life to save a fellow officer. And thanks to the heroes at Boston Medical Center, I'm told Officer Moynihan is awake and talking, and we wish him a full and speedy recovery.

I also want to single out someone who very much wanted to be here, just as he was every day for nearly 25 years as he represented this Commonwealth alongside Ted in the Senate, and that's Secretary of State John Kerry. As many of you know, John is in Europe with our allies and partners, leading the negotiations with Iran and the world community and standing up for a principle that Ted and his brother,

President Kennedy, believed in so strongly: "Let us never negotiate out of fear, but let us never fear to negotiate."

And finally, in his first years in the Senate, Ted dispatched a young aide to assemble a team of talent without rival. The sell was simple: Come and help Ted Kennedy make history. And so I want to give a special shout-out to his extraordinarily loyal staff, 50 years later a family more than 1,000 strong. This is your day as well. We're proud of you. Of course, many of you now work with me. [*Laughter*] So enjoy today, because we've got to get back to work. [*Laughter*]

Distinguished guests, fellow citizens: In 1958, Ted Kennedy was a young man working to reelect his brother Jack to the United States Senate. On election night, the two toasted one another: "Here's to 1960, Mr. President," Ted said, "If you can make it." With his quick Irish wit, Jack returned the toast: "Here's to 1962, Senator Kennedy, if you can make it." [*Laughter*] They both made it. And today, they're together again in eternal rest at Arlington.

But their legacies are as alive as ever, together right here in Boston. The John F. Kennedy Library next door is a symbol of our American idealism; the Edward M. Kennedy Institute for the United States Senate as a living example of the hard, frustrating, neverending, but critical work required to make that idealism real. What more fitting tribute, what better testament to the life of Ted Kennedy, than this place that he left for a new generation of Americans: a monument not to himself, but to what we, the people, have the power to do together.

Any of us who have had the privilege to serve in the Senate know that it's impossible not to share Ted's awe for the history swirling around you, an awe instilled in him by his brother Jack. Ted waited more than a year to deliver his first speech on the Senate floor. That's no longer the custom. [*Laughter*] It's good to see Trent and Tom Daschle here, because they remember what customs were like back then. [*Laughter*] And Ted gave a speech only because he felt there was a topic—the Civil Rights Act—that demanded it. Nevertheless, he spoke with humility, aware, as he put it, that "a freshman Senator should be seen, not heard; should learn and not teach."

Some of us, I admit, have not always heeded that lesson. [*Laughter*] But fortunately, we had Ted to show us the ropes anyway. And no one made the Senate come alive like Ted Kennedy. It was one of the great pleasures of my life to hear Ted Kennedy deliver one of his stemwinders on the floor. [*Laughter*] Rarely was he more animated than when he'd lead you through the living museums that were his offices. He could—and he would—tell you everything that there was to know about all of it. [*Laughter*]

And then, there were more somber moments. I still remember the first time I pulled open the drawer of my desk. Each Senator is assigned a desk, and there's a tradition of carving the names of those who had used it before. And those names in my desk included Taft and Baker, Simon, Wellstone, and Robert F. Kennedy.

The Senate was a place where you instinctively pulled yourself up a little bit straighter, where you tried to act a little bit better. "Being a Senator changes a person," Ted wrote in his memoirs. As Vicki said, it may take a year or 2 years or 3 years, but it always happens: It fills you with a heightened sense of purpose.

That's the magic of the Senate. That's the essence of what it can be. And who but Ted Kennedy, and his family, would create a full-scale replica of the Senate Chamber and open it to everyone?

We live in a time of such great cynicism about all our institutions. And we are cynical about government and about Washington most of all. It's hard for our children to see, in the noisy and too often trivial pursuits of today's politics, the possibilities of our democracy, our capacity, together, to do big things.

And this place can help change that. It can help light the fire of imagination, plant the seed of noble ambition in the minds of future generations. Imagine a gaggle of school kids clutching tablets, turning classrooms into cloakrooms and hallways into hearing rooms, assigned an issue of the day and the responsibility to solve it.

Imagine their moral universe expanding as they hear about the momentous battles waged in that chamber and how they echo throughout today's society: great questions of war and peace; the tangled bargains between North and South, Federal and State; the original sins of slavery and prejudice; and the unfinished battles for civil rights and opportunity and equality.

Imagine the shift in their sense of what's possible. The first time they see a video of senators who look like they do: men and women; Blacks and Whites, Latinos, Asian-Americans; those born to great wealth, but also those born of incredibly modest means.

Imagine what a child feels the first time she steps onto that floor, before she's old enough to be cynical; before she's told what she can't do; before she's told who she can't talk to or work with; what she feels when she sits at one of those desks; what happens when it comes her turn to stand and speak on behalf of something she cares about and cast a vote and have a sense of purpose.

It's maybe just not for kids. What if we all carried ourselves that way? What if our politics, our democracy, were as elevated, as purposeful, as she imagines it to be right here?

Towards the end of his life, Ted reflected on how Congress has changed over time. And those who served earlier, I think, have those same conversations. It's a more diverse, more accurate reflection of America than it used to be, and that is a grand thing, a great achievement. But Ted grieved the loss of camaraderie and collegiality, the face-to-face interaction. I think he regretted the arguments now made to cameras instead of colleagues, directed at a narrow base instead of the body politic as a whole; the outsized influence of money and special interests—and how it all leads more Americans to turn away in disgust and simply choose not to exercise their right to vote.

Now, since this is a joyous occasion, this is not the time for me to suggest a slew of new ideas for reform. [*Laughter*] Although, I do have some. [*Laughter*] Maybe I'll just mention one. What if we carried ourselves more like Ted Kennedy? What if we worked to follow his example a little bit harder? To his harshest critics, who saw him as nothing more than a partisan lightning rod, that may sound foolish, but there are Republicans here today for a reason. They know who Ted Kennedy was. It's not because they shared Ted's ideology or his positions, but because they knew Ted as somebody who bridged the partisan divide over and over and over again, with genuine effort and affection, in an era when bipartisanship has become so very rare.

They knew him as somebody who kept his word. They knew him as somebody who was willing to take a half a loaf and endure the anger of his own supporters to get something done. They knew him as somebody who was not afraid. And fear so permeates our politics, instead of hope. People fight to get in the Senate, and then they're afraid. We fight to get these positions and then don't want to do anything with them. And Ted understood, the only point of running for office was to get something done—not to posture; not to sit there worrying about the next election or the polls—to take risks. He understood that differences of party or philosophy could not become barriers to cooperation or respect.

He could howl at injustice on the Senate floor like a force of nature, while nervous aides tried to figure out which chart to pull up next. [*Laughter*] But in his personal dealings, he answered Edmund Randolph's call to keep the Senate a place to "restrain, if possible, the fury of democracy."

I did not know Ted as long as some of the speakers here today. But he was my friend. I owe him a lot. And as far as I could tell, it was never ideology that compelled him, except insofar as his ideology said, you should help people; that you should have a life of purpose; that you should be empathetic and be able to put yourself in somebody else's shoes and see through their eyes. His tirelessness, his restlessness, they were rooted in his experience.

By the age of 12, he was a member of a Gold Star family. By 36, two of his brothers were stolen from him in the most tragic, public of ways. By 41, he nearly lost a beloved child to cancer. And that made suffering something he

knew. And it made him more alive to the suffering of others.

While his son was sleeping after treatment, Ted would wander the halls of the hospital, meet other parents keeping vigil over their own children. They were parents terrified of what would happen when they couldn't afford the next treatment; parents working out what they could sell or borrow or mortgage just to make it just a few more months, and then, if they had to, bargain with God for the rest.

There, in the quiet night, working people of modest means and one of the most powerful men in the world shared the same intimate, immediate sense of helplessness. He didn't see them as some abstraction. He knew them. He felt them. Their pain was his as much as they might be separated by wealth and fame. And those families would be at the heart of Ted's passions. Just like the young immigrant, he would see himself in that child. They were his cause: the sick child who couldn't see a doctor, the young soldier sent to battle without armor, the citizen denied her rights because of what she looked like or where she came from or who she loves.

He quietly attended as many military funerals in Massachusetts as he could for those who fell in Iraq and Afghanistan. He called and wrote each one of the 177 families in this Commonwealth who lost a loved one on 9/11, and he took them sailing and played with their children, not just in the days after, but every year after.

His life's work was not to champion those with wealth or power or connections; they already had enough representation. It was to give voice to the people who wrote and called him from every State, desperate for somebody who might listen and help. And it was about what he could do for others.

It's why he'd take his hearings to hospitals in rural towns and inner cities, and push people out of their comfort zones, including his colleagues. Because he had pushed himself out of his comfort zone. And he tried to instill in his colleagues that same sense of empathy. Even if they called him, as one did, "wrong at the top of his lungs." Even if they might disagree with him 99 percent of the time. Because who knew what might happen with that other 1 percent?

Orrin Hatch was sent to Washington in part because he promised to fight Ted Kennedy. And they fought a lot. One was a conservative Mormon from Utah, after all; the other one was, well, Ted Kennedy. [*Laughter*] But once they got to know one another, they discovered certain things in common: a devout faith, a soft spot for health care, very fine singing voices. [*Laughter*]

In 1986, when Republicans controlled the Senate, Orrin held the first hearing on the AIDS epidemic, even hugging an AIDS patient, an incredible and very important gesture at the time. The next year, Ted took over the Committee and continued what Orrin started. When Orrin's father passed away, Ted was one of the first to call. And it was over dinner at Ted's house one night that they decided to try and insure the 10 million children who didn't have access to health care.

As that debate hit roadblocks in Congress, as apparently debates over health care tend to do—[*laughter*]—Ted would have his Chief of Staff serenade Orrin to court his support. When hearings didn't go Ted's way, he might puff on a cigar to annoy Orrin, who disdained smoking. [*Laughter*] When they didn't go Orrin's way, he might threaten to call Ted's sister Eunice. [*Laughter*] And when it came time to find a way to pay for the Children's Health Insurance Program that they, together, had devised, Ted pounced, offering a tobacco tax and asking, "Are you for Joe Camel and the Marlboro Man or millions of children who lack adequate health care?"

It was the kind of friendship unique to the Senate, calling to mind what John Calhoun once said of Henry Clay: "I don't like Clay. He is a bad man, an imposter, a creator of wicked schemes. I wouldn't speak to him, but, by God, I love him!" [*Laughter*]

So, sure, Orrin Hatch once called Ted "one of the major dangers to the country." [*Laughter*] But he also stood up at a gathering in Ted's last months and said, "I'm asking you all to pray for Ted Kennedy."

The point is, we can fight on almost everything. But we can come together on some

things. And those "somethings" can mean everything to a whole lot of people. It was common ground that led Ted and Orrin to forge a compromise that covered millions of kids with health care. It was common ground, rooted in the plight of loved ones, that led Ted and Chuck Grassley to cover kids with disabilities; that led Ted and Pete Domenici to fight for equal rights for Americans with a mental illness.

Common ground, not rooted in abstractions or stubborn, rigid ideologies, but shared experience, that led Ted and John McCain to work on a patient's bill of rights, and to work to forge a smarter, more just immigration system.

A common desire to fix what's broken. A willingness to compromise in pursuit of a larger goal. A personal relationship that lets you fight like heck on one issue and shake hands on the next, not through just cajoling or horsetrading or serenades, but through Ted's brand of friendship and kindness, and humor and grace.

"What binds us together across our differences in religion or politics or economic theory," Ted wrote in his memoirs, "[is] all we share as human beings—the wonder that we experience when we look at the night sky; the gratitude that we know when we feel the heat of the sun; the sense of humor in the face of the unbearable; and the persistence of suffering. And one thing more—the capacity to reach across our differences to offer a hand of healing."

For all the challenges of a changing world, for all the imperfections of our democracy, the capacity to reach across our differences is something that's entirely up to us. May we all, in our own lives, set an example for the kids who enter these doors, and exit with higher expectations for their country. May we all remember the times this American family has challenged us to ask what we can do; to dream and say why not; to seek a cause that endures; and sail against the wind in its pursuit and live our lives with that heightened sense of purpose.

Thank you. May God bless you. May He continue to bless this country we love. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:16 p.m. He was introduced by Victoria Reggie Kennedy, wife of former Sen. Edward M. Kennedy. In his remarks, he referred to Patrick J. Kennedy II, Edward M. Kennedy, Jr., G. Curran Raclin, and Caroline R. Raclin, children, and former U.S. Ambassador to Ireland Jean Kennedy Smith, sister, of former Sen. Kennedy; Richard H. Donohue, Jr., transit officer, Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority Police; former Sens. C. Trent Lott, Thomas A. Daschle, and Pete V. Domenici; and Kenneth R. Feinberg, founder and managing partner, Feinberg Rozen, LLP, in his capacity as Chief of Staff for former Sen. Kennedy.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on the Recommendations of the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission
March 30, 2015

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

After having reviewed the recommendations proposed by the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission (the "Commission"), I believe the recommendations are an important step forward in protecting the long-term viability of the All-Volunteer Force, improving quality-of-life for service members and their families, and ensuring the fiscal sustainability of the military compensation and retirement systems. Our men and women in uniform and their families deserve nothing less, and I thank the Commission for its work.

My Administration fully supports the underlying objectives of each of the Commission's 15 recommendations. Upon receipt of these recommendations, I directed my team to consider these recommendations and to work with the

Commission to adopt or refine the specific proposals in as many instances as possible. Given the complexity of military compensation and retirement programs and our solemn responsibility to ensure that any changes further the objectives above, I will report to the Congress by April 30, 2015, on the initial results of this work and with proposals that I recommend be enacted without delay; subsequent analysis may be needed for some of the recommendations.

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to John A. Boehner, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate.

Letter to the Chairman of the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission on the Commission's Recommendations
March 30, 2015

Dear Mr. Chairman:

After having reviewed the recommendations proposed by the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission (the "Commission"), I believe the recommendations are an important step forward in protecting the long-term viability of the All-Volunteer Force, improving quality-of-life for service members and their families, and ensuring the fiscal sustainability of the military compensation and retirement systems. Our men and women in uniform and their families deserve nothing less, and I thank you and the Commission for your work.

My Administration fully supports the underlying objectives of each of the Commission's 15 recommendations. Upon receipt of these recommendations, I directed my team to consider these recommendations and to work with the Commission to adopt or refine the specific proposals in as many instances as possible. Given the complexity of military compensation and retirement programs and our solemn responsibility to ensure that any changes further the objectives above, I will report to the Congress by April 30, 2015, on the initial results of this work and with proposals that I recommend be enacted without delay; subsequent analysis may be needed for some of the recommendations.

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: The letter was sent to Alphonso Maldon, Jr., Chairman, Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission.

Remarks on Signing a Memorandum of Disapproval Regarding Legislation Concerning the National Labor Relations Board Rule on Representation Case Procedures
March 31, 2015

Well, I am about to sign a memorandum of disapproval. A while back, the National Labor Relations Board, the NLRB, put forward some commonsense, modest changes to streamline the voting process for folks who wanted to join a union. And unfortunately, the Republican Senate and House decided to put forward a proposal to reverse those changes. I think that's a bad idea.

Unions historically have been at the forefront of establishing things like the 40-hour work week, the weekend, elimination of child labor laws, establishing fair benefits and decent wages. And one of the freedoms of folks here in the United States is, is that if they choose to join a union, they should be able to do so. And we shouldn't be making it impossible for that to happen.

So not only am I going to be signing this memorandum of disapproval; I also want to announce that in the fall, we're going to host a summit on increasing the voice and the rights of workers here in the United States. We've had a terrific economic recovery. We've got more work to do. We're finally seeing wages begin to tick up after many consecutive years of job growth. Nevertheless, what's true is, is that we've got record corporate profits. Folks at the very top are doing very well. Middle class families and folks trying to work their way into the middle class still have some big difficulties.

And part of what we want to do is to make sure that we give workers the capacity to have their voices heard, to have some influence in the workplace, to make sure that they're partners in building up the U.S. economy, and that growth is broad-based, and that everybody is benefiting just as everybody is contributing. So that's something that I'm very much looking forward to. We'll have a wide range of voices from the business community, from small businesses, from the workers in a wide range of fields: academics, organizers. Because I think that everybody here in America wants to make sure that even as the economy is growing, everybody is playing a part in that growth and everybody is sharing and contributing to that success.

So with that, let me sign this memorandum of disapproval. Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:08 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to S.J. Res. 8.

Memorandum of Disapproval Regarding Legislation Concerning the National Labor Relations Board Rule on Representation Case Procedures
March 31, 2015

S.J. Res. 8 would overturn the National Labor Relations Board's recently issued "representation case procedures" rule and block modest but overdue reforms to simplify and streamline private sector union elections. Accordingly, I am withholding my approval of this resolution. (The Pocket Veto Case, 279 U.S. 655 (1929)).

Workers need a strong voice in the workplace and the economy to protect and grow our Nation's middle class. Unions have played a vital role in giving workers that voice, allowing workers to organize together for higher wages, better working conditions, and the benefits and protections that most workers take for granted today. Workers deserve a level playing field that lets them freely choose to make their voices heard, and this requires fair and streamlined procedures for determining whether to have unions as their bargaining representative. Because this resolution seeks to undermine a streamlined democratic process that allows American workers to freely choose to make their voices heard, I cannot support it.

To leave no doubt that the resolution is being vetoed, in addition to withholding my signature, I am returning S.J. Res. 8 to the Secretary of the Senate, along with this Memorandum of Disapproval.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
March 31, 2015.

NOTE: The memorandum referred to Secretary of the Senate Julie E. Adams.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to South Sudan
March 31, 2015

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13664 of April 3, 2014, with respect to South Sudan is to continue in effect beyond April 3, 2015.

The situation in and in relation to South Sudan, which has been marked by activities that threaten the peace, security, or stability of South Sudan and the surrounding region, including widespread violence and atrocities, human rights abuses, recruitment and use of child soldiers, attacks on peacekeepers, and obstruction of humanitarian operations, continues to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. For this reason, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13664 with respect to South Sudan.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to John A. Boehner, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate. The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Statement on the Presidential Election in Nigeria
April 1, 2015

The last few days have shown the world the strength of Nigeria's commitment to democratic principles. By turning out in large numbers and sometimes waiting all day to cast their votes, Nigerians came together to decide the future of their country peacefully.

I commend President Goodluck Jonathan and President-elect Muhammadu Buhari for their public commitments to nonviolence throughout the campaign. President Jonathan has placed his country's interests first by conceding the election and congratulating President-elect Buhari on his victory. I look forward to working with President Jonathan throughout the remainder of his term, and I thank him for his many years of service and his statesmanlike conduct at this critical juncture. I urge President-elect Buhari and President Jonathan to repeat their calls to their supporters to continue to respect the election outcomes, focus on unifying the country, and together lead Nigeria through a peaceful transition.

Nigeria's Independent National Election Commission (INEC) and its Chairman, Attahiru Jega, deserve special recognition for what independent international observers have deemed a largely peaceful and orderly vote. I commend INEC for its extensive efforts to increase the credibility and transparency of the electoral process. Looking ahead to the gubernatorial elections on April 11, it is imperative that national attention turn to ensuring isolated logistical challenges are overcome and peace is protected, even in the most hotly contested races.

On behalf of the American people, I extend congratulations to the people of Nigeria

and to President-elect Buhari and look forward to continuing to work with the newly elected Government on our many shared priorities.

Statement on Signing an Executive Order on Blocking the Property of Certain Persons Engaging in Significant Malicious Cyber-Enabled Activities
April 1, 2015

Today I issued an Executive order that provides a new authority to respond to the threat posed by malicious cyber actors. Cyber threats pose one of the most serious economic and national security challenges to the United States, and my administration is pursuing a comprehensive strategy to confront them. As we have seen in recent months, these threats can emanate from a range of sources and target our critical infrastructure, our companies, and our citizens. This Executive order offers a targeted tool for countering the most significant cyber threats that we face.

This Executive order authorizes the Secretary of the Treasury, in consultation with the Attorney General and the Secretary of State, to impose sanctions on individuals or entities that engage in malicious cyber-enabled activities that create a significant threat to the national security, foreign policy, or economic health or financial stability of the United States. The malicious cyber-enabled activity must have the purpose or effect of significantly harming or compromising critical infrastructure; misappropriating funds or economic resources, trade secrets, personal identifiers, or financial information for commercial or competitive advantage or private financial gain; knowingly receiving or using trade secrets that were stolen by cyber-enabled means for commercial or competitive advantage or private financial gain; disrupting the availability of a computer or network of computers, for example, through a denial of service attack; and attempting, assisting, or providing material support for any of the above activities.

I intend to employ the authorities of my office and this administration, including diplomatic engagement, trade policy tools, and law enforcement mechanisms, to counter the threat posed by malicious cyber actors. This Executive order supports the administration's broader strategy by adding a new authority to combat the most serious malicious cyber threats that we face.

NOTE: The statement referred to Executive Order 13694, which is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Blocking the Property of Certain Persons Engaging in Significant Malicious Cyber-Enabled Activities
April 1, 2015

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Pursuant to the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701 *et seq.*) (IEEPA), I hereby report that I have issued an Executive Order (the "order") declaring a national emergency with respect to the unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States posed by the increasing prevalence and severity of malicious cyber-enabled activities originating from, or directed by persons located, in whole or in substantial part, outside the United States.

The order would block the property and interests in property of:

- any person determined by the Secretary of the Treasury, in consultation with the Attorney General and the Secretary of State, to be responsible for or complicit in, or to have engaged in, directly or indi-

rectly, cyber-enabled activities originating from, or directed by persons located, in whole or in substantial part, outside the United States that are reasonably likely to result in, or have materially contributed to, a significant threat to the national security, foreign policy, or economic health or financial stability of the United States and that have the purpose or effect of:

- harming, or otherwise significantly compromising the provision of services by, a computer or network of computers that support one or more entities in a critical infrastructure sector;
- significantly compromising the provision of services by one or more entities in a critical infrastructure sector;
- causing a significant disruption to the availability of a computer or network of computers; or
- causing a significant misappropriation of funds or economic resources, trade secrets, personal identifiers, or financial information for commercial or competitive advantage or private financial gain; or

- any person determined by the Secretary of the Treasury, in consultation with the Attorney General and the Secretary of State:
  - to be responsible for or complicit in, or to have engaged in, the receipt or use for commercial or competitive advantage or private financial gain, or by a commercial entity, outside the United States of trade secrets misappropriated through cyber-enabled means, knowing they have been misappropriated, where the misappropriation of such trade secrets is reasonably likely to result in, or has materially contributed to, a significant threat to the national security, foreign policy, or economic health or financial stability of the United States;
  - to have materially assisted, sponsored, or provided financial, material, or technological support for, or goods or services in support of, certain malicious cyber-enabled activities described in the order or any person whose property and interests in property are blocked pursuant to the order;
  - to be owned or controlled by, or to have acted or purported to act for or on behalf of, directly or indirectly, any person whose property and interests in property are blocked pursuant to the order; or
  - to have attempted to engage in any of the malicious activities described in the order.

In addition, the order suspends entry into the United States of any alien determined to meet one or more of the above criteria.

I have delegated to the Secretary of the Treasury the authority, in consultation with the Attorney General and the Secretary of State, to take such actions, including the promulgation of rules and regulations, and to employ all powers granted to the President by IEEPA as may be necessary to carry out the purposes of the order. All executive agencies are directed to take all appropriate measures within their authority to carry out the provisions of the order.

I am enclosing a copy of the Executive Order I have issued.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to John A. Boehner, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate. Executive Order 13694 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks on International Diplomatic Efforts To Prevent Iran From Obtaining a Nuclear Weapon

April 2, 2015

Good afternoon, everybody. Today the United States, together with our allies and partners, has reached a historic understanding with Iran, which, if fully implemented, will prevent it from obtaining a nuclear weapon.

As President and Commander in Chief, I have no greater responsibility than the security of the American people. And I am convinced that if this framework leads to a final, comprehensive deal, it will make our country, our allies, and our world safer.

This has been a long time coming. The Islamic Republic of Iran has been advancing its nuclear program for decades. By the time I took office, Iran was operating thousands of centrifuges, which can produce the materials for a nuclear bomb, and Iran was concealing a covert nuclear facility. I made clear that we were prepared to resolve this issue diplomatically, but only if Iran came to the table in a serious way. When that did not happen, we rallied the world to impose the toughest sanctions in history, sanctions which had a profound impact on the Iranian economy.

Now, sanctions alone could not stop Iran's nuclear program, but they did help bring Iran to the negotiating table. Because of our diplomatic efforts, the world stood with us, and we were joined at the negotiating table by the world's major powers: the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Russia, and China, as well as the European Union.

Over a year ago, we took the first step towards today's framework with a deal to stop the progress of Iran's nuclear program and roll it back in key areas. And recall that at the time, skeptics argued that Iran would cheat and that we could not verify their compliance and the interim agreement would fail. Instead, it has succeeded exactly as intended. Iran has met all of its obligations. It eliminated its stockpile of dangerous nuclear material. Inspections of Iran's program increased. And we continued negotiations to see if we could achieve a more comprehensive deal.

Today, after many months of tough, principled diplomacy, we have achieved the framework for that deal. And it is a good deal, a deal that meets our core objectives. This framework would cut off every pathway that Iran could take to develop a nuclear weapon. Iran will face strict limitations on its program, and Iran has also agreed to the most robust and intrusive inspections and transparency regime ever negotiated for any nuclear program in history. So this deal is not based on trust, it's based on unprecedented verification.

Many key details will be finalized over the next 3 months, and nothing is agreed to until everything is agreed. But here are the basic outlines of the deal that we are working to finalize.

First, Iran will not be able to pursue a bomb using plutonium, because it will not develop weapons-grade plutonium. The core of its reactor at Arak will be dismantled and replaced. The spent fuel from that facility will be shipped out of Iran for the life of the reactor. Iran will not build a new heavy-water reactor. And Iran will not reprocess fuel from its existing reactors—ever.

Second, this deal shuts down Iran's path to a bomb using enriched uranium. Iran has agreed that its installed centrifuges will be reduced by two-thirds. Iran will no longer enrich uranium at its Fordow facility. Iran will not enrich uranium with its advanced centrifuges for at least the next 10 years. The vast majority of Iran's stockpile of enriched uranium will be neutralized.

Today, estimates indicate that Iran is only 2 or 3 months away from potentially acquiring the raw materials that could be used for a single nuclear bomb. Under this deal, Iran has agreed that it will not stockpile the materials needed to build a weapon. Even if it violated the deal, for the next decade at least, Iran would be a minimum of a year away from acquiring enough material for a bomb. And the

strict limitations on Iran's stockpiles will last for 15 years.

Third, this deal provides the best possible defense against Iran's ability to pursue a nuclear weapon covertly, that is, in secret. International inspectors will have unprecedented access not only to Iranian nuclear facilities, but to the entire supply chain that supports Iran's nuclear program, from uranium mills that provide the raw materials to the centrifuge production and storage facilities that support the program. If Iran cheats, the world will know it. If we see something suspicious, we will inspect it. Iran's past efforts to weaponize its program will be addressed. With this deal, Iran will face more inspections than any other country in the world.

So this will be a long-term deal that addresses each path to a potential Iranian nuclear bomb. There will be strict limits on Iran's program for a decade. Additional restrictions on building new facilities or stockpiling materials will last for 15 years. The unprecedented transparency measures will last for 20 years or more. Indeed, some will be permanent. And as a member of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, Iran will never be permitted to develop a nuclear weapon.

In return for Iran's actions, the international community has agreed to provide Iran with relief from certain sanctions: our own sanctions and international sanctions imposed by the United Nations Security Council. This relief will be phased as Iran takes steps to adhere to the deal. If Iran violates the deal, sanctions can be snapped back into place. Meanwhile, other American sanctions on Iran—for its support of terrorism, its human rights abuses, its ballistic missile program—will continue to be fully enforced.

Now, let me reemphasize: Our work is not yet done. The deal has not been signed. Between now and the end of June, the negotiators will continue to work through the details of how this framework will be fully implemented, and those details matter. If there is backsliding on the part of the Iranians, if the verification and inspection mechanisms don't meet the specifications of our nuclear and security experts, there will be no deal. But if we can get this done and Iran follows through on the framework that our negotiators agreed to, we will be able to resolve one of the greatest threats to our security and to do so peacefully.

Given the importance of this issue, I have instructed my negotiators to fully brief Congress and the American people on the substance of the deal, and I welcome a robust debate in the weeks and months to come. I am confident that we can show that this deal is good for the security of the United States, for our allies, and for the world.

For the fact is, we only have three options for addressing Iran's nuclear program. First, we can reach a robust and verifiable deal—like this one—and peacefully prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon.

The second option is, we can bomb Iran's nuclear facilities, thereby starting another war in the Middle East and setting back Iran's program by a few years, in other words, setting it back by a fraction of the time that this deal will set it back. Meanwhile, we'd ensure that Iran would race ahead to try and build a bomb.

Third, we could pull out of negotiations, try to get other countries to go along and continue sanctions that are currently in place or add additional ones, and hope for the best, knowing that every time we have done so, Iran has not capitulated, but instead has advanced its program and that in very short order, the breakout timeline would be eliminated and a nuclear arms race in the region could be triggered because of that uncertainty. In other words, the third option leads us very quickly back to a decision about whether or not to take military action, because we'd have no idea what was going on inside of Iran.

Iran is not going to simply dismantle its program because we demand it to do so. That's not how the world works, and that's not what history shows us. Iran has shown no willingness to eliminate those aspects of their program that they maintain are for peaceful purposes, even in the face of unprecedented sanctions. Should negotiations collapse because we, the United States, rejected what the majority of the world considers a fair deal, what our scientists and

nuclear experts suggest would give us confidence that they are not developing a nuclear weapon, it's doubtful that we can even keep our current international sanctions in place.

So when you hear the inevitable critics of the deal sound off, ask them a simple question: Do you really think that this verifiable deal, if fully implemented, backed by the world's major powers, is a worse option than the risk of another war in the Middle East? Is it worse than doing what we've done for almost two decades, with Iran moving forward with its nuclear program and without robust inspections? I think the answer will be clear.

Remember, I have always insisted that I will do what is necessary to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon, and I will. But I also know that a diplomatic solution is the best way to get this done and offers a more comprehensive and lasting solution. It is our best option by far. And while it is always a possibility that Iran may try to cheat on the deal in the future, this framework of inspections and transparency makes it far more likely that we'll know about it if they try to cheat, and I—or future Presidents—will have preserved all of the options that are currently available to deal with it.

To the Iranian people, I want to reaffirm what I've said since the beginning of my Presidency: We are willing to engage you on the basis of mutual interests and mutual respect. This deal offers the prospect of relief from sanctions that were imposed because of Iran's violation of international law. Since Iran's Supreme Leader has issued a fatwa against the development of nuclear weapons, this framework gives Iran the opportunity to verify that its program is, in fact, peaceful. It demonstrates that if Iran complies with its international obligations, then it can fully rejoin the community of nations, thereby fulfilling the extraordinary talent and aspirations of the Iranian people. That would be good for Iran, and it would be good for the world.

Of course, this deal alone, even if fully implemented, will not end the deep divisions and mistrust between our two countries. We have a difficult history between us, and our concerns will remain with respect to Iranian behavior so long as Iran continues its sponsorship of terrorism, its support for proxies who destabilize the Middle East, its threats against America's friends and allies, like Israel. So make no mistake: We will remain vigilant in countering those actions and standing with our allies.

It's no secret that the Israeli Prime Minister and I don't agree about whether the United States should move forward with a peaceful resolution to the Iranian issue. If in fact Prime Minister Netanyahu is looking for the most effective way to ensure Iran doesn't get a nuclear weapon, this is the best option. And I believe our nuclear experts can confirm that.

More importantly, I will be speaking with the Prime Minister today to make clear that there will be no daylight—there is no daylight—when it comes to our support for Israel's security and our concerns about Iran's destabilizing policies and threats toward Israel. And that's why I've directed my national security team to consult closely with the new Israeli Government in the coming weeks and months about how we can further strengthen our long-term security cooperation with Israel and make clear our unshakeable commitment to Israel's defense.

Today I also spoke with the King of Saudi Arabia to reaffirm our commitment to the security of our partners in the Gulf. And I'm inviting the leaders of the six countries who make up the Gulf Cooperation Council—Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, and Bahrain—to meet me at Camp David this spring to discuss how we can further strengthen our security cooperation, while resolving the multiple conflicts that have caused so much hardship and instability throughout the Middle East.

Finally, it's worth remembering that Congress has, on a bipartisan basis, played a critical role in our current Iran policy, helping to shape the sanctions regime that applied so much pressure on Iran and ultimately forced them to the table. In the coming days and weeks, my administration will engage Congress once again about how we can play a—how it can play a constructive oversight role. I'll begin

that effort by speaking to the leaders of the House and Senate today.

In those conversations, I will underscore that the issues at stake here are bigger than politics. These are matters of war and peace, and they should be evaluated based on the facts and what is ultimately best for the American people and for our national security. For this is not simply a deal between my administration and Iran. This is a deal between Iran, the United States of America, and the major powers in the world, including some of our closest allies. If Congress kills this deal, not based on expert analysis and without offering any reasonable alternative, then it's the United States that will be blamed for the failure of diplomacy. International unity will collapse, and the path to conflict will widen.

The American people understand this, which is why solid majorities support a diplomatic resolution to the Iranian nuclear issue. They understand instinctively the words of President Kennedy, who faced down the far greater threat of communism and said: "Let us never negotiate out of fear. But let us never fear to negotiate." The American people remember that at the height of the cold war, Presidents like Nixon and Reagan struck historic arms control agreements with the Soviet Union, a far more dangerous adversary, despite the fact that that adversary not only threatened to destroy our country and our way of life, but had the means to do so. Those agreements were not perfect. They did not end all threats. But they made our world safer. A good deal with Iran will do the same.

Today I'd like to express my thanks to our international partners for their steadfastness and their cooperation. I was able to speak earlier today with our close allies, Prime Minister Cameron and President Hollande and Chancellor Merkel, to reaffirm that we stand shoulder to shoulder in this effort.

And most of all, on behalf of our Nation, I want to express my thanks to our tireless—and I mean tireless—Secretary of State John Kerry and our entire negotiating team. They have worked so hard to make this progress. They represent the best tradition of American diplomacy. Their work—our work—is not yet done, and success is not guaranteed. But we have an historic opportunity to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons in Iran, and to do so peacefully, with the international community firmly behind us. We should seize that chance.

Thank you. God bless you, and God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:25 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to King Salman bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia; Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Hoseini-Khamenei of Iran; Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom; President François Hollande of France; and Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany.

Remarks at Indatus ICIM Corporation in Louisville, Kentucky
April 2, 2015

The President. Hello, everybody! Hello! Please, please, have a seat. Have a seat, have a seat. Well, first of all, sorry I'm late. [*Laughter*] I had a couple things I had to do. [*Laughter*] And obviously, when you're the President, you've got—national security issues always take top priority. But I wanted to make sure that I still made it. And I'm so grateful that all of you were willing to come back and welcoming me in this way.

It is great to be back in Louisville. It is great to be here at Indatus. This is such a spiffy-looking company, I'm thinking about remodeling at the White House. [*Laughter*] Because everything is so hip and cool, and guys with, like, cool beards are—[*laughter*]—typing stuff. And it just looks wonderful.

But the reason I'm here is not just because it looks hip and cool, but because what's happening here is essential to America, and we want to lift it up, and we want people to see what's possible in developing the kind of innovation and job creation here in the 21st century, knowing that we can succeed. This company

and the network that's been developed here in Louisville are helping to prepare people of all ages for the higher paying, in-demand jobs of the future. And we need to get more of that done.

I want to thank David for the introduction and his graciousness in hosting us. There are other folks that I want to acknowledge because they have been great friends and are doing a tremendous job on behalf of their constituencies: your outstanding Governor Steve Beshear is here. Congressman John Yarmuth is here. We love John. Louisville Mayor Greg Fischer, who not only gave me a Slugger, but also a really big suitcase full of bourbon. [*Laughter*] I mean, it's a really big case. [*Laughter*] And the man who served as mayor before him who now works with me at the White House, doing outstanding work with mayors and Governors and county officials all across the country: my dear friend, Jerry Abramson. Where's Jerry? There he is back there.

So, over the past 5 years, our businesses have created 12 million new jobs—over 12 million new jobs. Right now America has more open jobs than at any point since 2001. And more than half a million openings are in tech, nearly 2,000 here in Louisville alone. Tech jobs pay one-and-a-half times the average private sector wage. So they're great pathways to the middle class. And what's more, a highly trained workforce is vital for America's long-term global economic leadership. It attracts more entrepreneurship; it attracts investors from overseas, because they're looking for an outstanding workforce.

And that's the idea behind a new initiative of ours that we're calling TechHire. It's a pretty simple concept. It brings employers and local governments together to support innovative job training programs: like online classes, coding boot camps, community college courses designed by local employers.

So Eastern Kentucky is a TechHire Community. So is Louisville. More than 20 employers have joined it so far, including Indatus. You're mentoring students at Code Louisville and you've pledged to hire their graduates. And that's what smart training looks like: faster, cheaper, innovative, providing new pathways—less conventional pathways, in some cases—for careers in tech.

And my administration is proud to be investing in Code Louisville, because we want more places to follow Kentucky's example. We should invest in what works: apprenticeships that give on-the-job training, gives them industry credentials that let anybody who can do the job get the job, whether they're self-taught or have a degree. And the budget that I sent to Congress includes these priorities. Today we're going to unveil workforce reforms that do the same.

And just to give you a specific example; I hope he doesn't mind. Maybe he's here, or maybe he's still back somewhere. The reason I remember this guy is because his name is Ben Kuhl—[*laughter*]—which is a really cool name. [*Laughter*] I mean, I kind of wish my name was Ben Kuhl. [*Laughter*] Ben doesn't have a college degree, but because of the work that's done is open-source, Ben essentially was able to teach himself. And because Indatus recognizes that not all talent goes through conventional pathways, it was able to set up a structure whereby Ben could show what he knew, how well he could do it, and Indatus was able to hire him and now they've got an outstanding coder and somebody who's providing enormous value to the company, which might have been missed had it not been for these kinds of different pathways.

And then, I just heard a story—if I'm not mistaken, Ben, you had a friend who came here and started working in, what, customer service?

Software developer Ben Kuhl. Yes.

The President. Also didn't have a degree in computer science or coding, but then he ended up taking an hour class a couple hours a week, teaching himself, getting trained, and now he's doing coding as well. So that's the idea here, is that there are a lot of different pathways that we create so that more and more people can get trained in the jobs of the future and we're not restricting ourselves to one narrow path.

And we're making sure that everybody has opportunity and everybody has a shot. And we're investing in the job training and apprenticeships and on-the-job training and online training that it's going to take to make sure that anybody can access a good job if they're willing to work hard and apply themselves and focus.

Now, this doesn't cost huge amounts of money, but it does cost some money to do it right and to do it well. And that's why it's reflected in my budget, for us to put more money into job training, apprenticeships, and these kinds of public-private partnerships that we're talking about. And there's going to be a big debate coming up around the budget.

Republicans in Congress have put forward their budget, and it provides tax cuts to folks like me and folks who are doing pretty darn well, but it would cut right now job training for 2.2 million people, including 28,800 right here in Kentucky. And that's just not the right way for us to plan in terms of long-term growth and stability.

Our economy has been growing. We've got momentum, but that momentum can stall. Because the economies in Europe are weak, the economies in Asia are weak, the dollar is becoming stronger because a lot of people want to park their money here. They think it's safer. They're investing here more. But that makes our exports more expensive. And so we've got to stay hungry. We can't just sit back and assume that growth continues at the kind of pace that we need to give opportunity for all the young people of the future.

And that's why this is so important. So we can't prioritize tax cuts for folks at the very top and sacrifice the kinds of job training efforts and apprenticeships that our young people are going to need.

So, in case you're—you think I'm exaggerating, I mean, one of the laws that my friends on the other side of the aisle are trying to pass right now is a new, deficit-busting tax cut for a fraction of—the top one-tenth of 1 percent; that's fewer than 50 people here in Kentucky who would, on average, get a couple million dollars in tax breaks. For that amount of money, we can provide thousands of people the kind of training they need. And that has—that's just not the way that we're going to build an economy that strengthens our middle class and provides ladders for people getting into the middle class.

Our economy has grown since the crisis, but when you look at what's happened, middle class folks, their wages, their incomes just haven't gone up that much. And a lot of folks are still struggling to get by. And our economy works best when everybody has a stake and everybody is getting ahead. When that happens, we all do well. And by the way, when that happens, businesses do well, because they have more customers. And our economy grows best from the bottom up and the middle out, not from the top down. And we've got to keep that in mind as we go forward.

But let me again just congratulate Indatus for the outstanding work that they're doing. I want to congratulate the mayor and the Governor and all the folks who are participating in making sure that TechHire gets off the ground, not just here in Louisville, but across the State and across the country. For all the young people who are—especially the really young ones—[*laughter*]—make sure to study math and science, because you guys are going to be our future. We're very, very proud of you.

And once again, thanks for being so patient with me, despite the delays. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:15 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to David Durik, chief executive officer, Indatus ICIM Corp.; and Jerry E. Abramson, Director, Office of Intergovernmental Affairs.

Remarks at Hill Air Force Base, Utah
April 3, 2015

Well, good morning, everybody. It is wonderful to be in the beautiful State of Utah. And I want to thank General Buhler and Colonel Jolly and everyone here at Hill Air Force Base, one of the most outstanding facilities that we have.

Every single day, your work keeps our Air Force ready to meet the many threats that are out there: threats like ISIL, the work that we're doing in Iraq. You support our troops, our humanitarian missions around the world, and you keep the American people safe. And so to all of our folks in uniform and the civilians who support them, I want to say thank you for the incredible work that you do every single day. And I think the American people want you to know how much they appreciate it as well.

I just had the opportunity to take a look at the solar installation on this base and to meet with some of your outstanding representatives, including Senator Orrin Hatch and Congressman Rob Bishop, Mayor Ralph Becker, who's doing outstanding work, and leaders in the solar industry as well as our community college system, who were talking about Salt Lake City's commitment to renewable energy, its impact on jobs, its impact on business, and its impact on the environment and climate change.

Since I took office, solar electricity has gone up twentyfold. And our investments in renewable energy and energy efficiency haven't just helped to cut carbon pollution, they've made us more energy independent. And they've helped us create a steady stream of high-wage, good-paying, middle class jobs.

This morning we learned that our businesses created another 129,000 new jobs in March. And that adds up to 3 million jobs over the past year, more than 12 million new jobs over the past 5 years. And that's the longest stretch of private sector job creation on record. But we've got to be relentless in our work to grow the economy and create good jobs.

Parts of the globe have seen their economies weaken. Europe has had a weaker economy; Asia has been slowing down. We have had the strongest economy, but we're impacted by what happens around the world. And that's why we have to redouble our efforts to make sure that we're competitive, to make sure that we're taking the steps that are needed for us to be successful.

And I think everybody here at Hill understands that one of the most important aspects of national security is strong economic security. We can't maintain the best military that the world has ever known unless we also have an economy that's humming. And a lot of our men and women in uniform at some point are going to transition into civilian life, and we want to make sure that after they've fought for our freedom that they've got jobs to come home to. And that means that, working together—not only the private sector has to work, but government has to work to take the steps that we know will grow our economy. And I'm hoping that, working with Congress, we can get some things done this year.

Rebuilding our infrastructure all across the country. Those are jobs that can't be exported. And not only does it put people to work right now, it makes us competitive over the long term because businesses are going to locate where they've got topnotch infrastructure.

Investing in education and job training to boost growth right here in the United States, because, again, businesses will locate where they've got a trained workforce.

Making sure that we are passing trade promotion authority. Orrin Hatch is working very hard on that. Utah is one of the leading exporting States in the country and part of the reason that this State has been so successful. And we're very grateful that Senator Hatch is working with Senator Wyden to make sure that we can get that deal done.

And what I'm doing here today is to highlight the fact that the solar industry is actually adding jobs 10 times faster than the rest of the economy. They're paying good jobs—they're good-paying jobs that are helping folks enter

into the middle class. And today what we're going to try to do is to build on the progress that's already been made.

I'm announcing a new goal to train 75,000 workers to enter the solar industry by 2020. As part of this, we're creating what we're calling a Solar Ready Vets program that's modeled after some successful pilot initiatives that have already been established over the last several years. It's going to train transitioning military personnel for careers in this growing industry at 10 bases, including right here at Hill.

And as part of this effort, we're also going to work with States to enable more veterans to use the post-9/11 GI bill for solar job training. And it's one of the many steps that we're taking to help nearly 700,000 veterans and military spouses get a job. In fact, about 30 percent of the Federal workforce is now made up of veterans. I've said it before, and I think employers are starting to catch on: If you really want to get the job done, hire a veteran.

So Hill is leading by example. It is getting about 20 percent—maybe a little higher than that—of its overall energy through renewable energy sources, including this installation. DOD—Department of Defense, our military across the board—is becoming more and more efficient because that saves money. And it means that we've got more money for personnel, for training, for equipment, for making sure our fighting forces are able to get the job done.

What is true for DOD has to be true for the entire country. And it's going to provide enormous prospects for jobs and careers for a whole lot of folks out there—if we continue to make this investment.

So we've got to lead by example, invest in the future, train our workers for good, new jobs in the clean energy economy. That's how we're going to keep our economy growing, and that's how we're going to create new jobs and create more opportunity for the American people.

We're also, as a byproduct of that, going to make this country safer, and we're going to make the planet more secure. We're going to make sure that the environment that we're passing on and the incredible beauty of this remarkable State's passed on to future generations as well.

So thank you very much, all of you, for the great work you're doing. And thank you to the State of Utah for your wonderful hospitality. I was telling the Governor yesterday as we were riding from the airport that I'm going to make sure that I come back next time where I don't have to do so much work and I can visit some of these amazing national parks here and have a chance to visit with some of the wonderful people here in the great State of Utah.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Brig. Gen. Carl A. Buhler, USAF, commander, and Col. Ronald E. Jolly, Sr., USAF, deputy commander for maintenance, Ogden Air Logistics Complex, Hill Air Force Base, UT; Mayor Ralph E. Becker, Jr., of Salt Lake City, UT; and Gov. Gary R. Herbert of Utah. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

Statement on the Observance of Passover
April 3, 2015

Michelle and I send our warmest greetings to all those celebrating Passover in the United States, in the State of Israel, and throughout the world.

Tonight, for the seventh year, I'll hold a Seder in the White House, and we'll join millions of Jewish families as we retell one of humanity's great stories of liberation. The Exodus was neither easy nor quick. The Israelites' journey to freedom required them to choose faith over fear and courage over complacency. Above all, it required the works of an awesome God, who led them out of bondage with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm.

The story of the Exodus—the signs and wonders that appeared when hope seemed lost, the Jewish people's abiding belief that they would one day reach the Promised Land—has inspired countless generations over the years. It inspired Jewish families to hold fast to their faith, even during times of terrible persecution. It inspired young civil rights leaders as they marched across an Alabama bridge in search of their own Promised Land, half a century ago.

And it continues to inspire us today. Tonight my family will read the passage of the Haggadah that declares we must see ourselves as though we personally were liberated from Egypt. The Exodus reminds us that progress has always come slow and the future has always been uncertain, but it also reminds there is always reason for hope.

Like the Israelites who Moses led out of slavery long ago, it is up to us to never lose faith in the better day that lies ahead. In our own country, we can continue our march toward a more perfect Union. Around the world, we can seek to extend the miracles of freedom and peace, prosperity and security, to more of God's creation. And together, we can continue the hard but awesome work of *tikkun olam,* and do our part to repair the world.

From my family to yours, *Chag Sameach.*

Statement on the Observance of Easter
April 3, 2015

Michelle and I join our fellow Christians around the world in observing Good Friday and celebrating Easter this weekend. With humility and awe, we give thanks for the extraordinary sacrifice that Jesus made for our salvation. We rejoice in the triumph of the Resurrection. And we renew our commitment to live as He commanded: to love God with all our heart, soul, and mind, and to love our neighbors as ourselves. I look forward to continuing our celebration on Tuesday when I host our annual Easter prayer breakfast as we remember the teachings of Jesus in our daily lives, stand with those around the world who are persecuted for their faith, and pray for peace, justice, and freedom for all people.

Statement on the Terrorist Attack in Garissa, Kenya
April 3, 2015

Michelle and I join the American people in expressing our horror and sadness at the reports coming out of Garissa, Kenya. Words cannot adequately condemn the terrorist atrocities that took place at Garissa University College, where innocent men and women were brazenly and brutally massacred. We join the world in mourning them, many of whom were students pursuing an education in the pursuit of a better life for themselves and their loved ones. They represented a brighter future for a region that has seen too much violence for far too long. We also commend the heroism of the responders who lost their lives in the selfless protection of the students and faculty.

I know firsthand the extraordinary resilience and fundamental decency of the people of Kenya. So I know that the people of Garissa and all of Kenya will grieve, but their determination to achieve a better and more secure future will not be deterred. And neither will the resolve of the United States. We will stand hand in hand with the Kenyan Government and people against the scourge of terrorism and in their efforts to bring communities together. This much is clear: The future of Kenya will not be defined by violence and terror; it will be shaped by young people like those at Garissa University College—by their talents, their hopes, and their achievements. This is a message I will relay to the Kenyan people when I visit Ke-

nya in July. Even at this difficult hour, the Kenyan people should know they have an unwavering friend and ally in the United States of America.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Proposed Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers Designations for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge
April 3, 2015

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Pursuant to section 304(g)(1) of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA), Public Law 96–487, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has revised the Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) and completed an environmental impact statement (EIS) for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. The revised CCP will guide the Service's management of the refuge for the next 15 years.

Based on the best available science and extensive public comment, the Service's preferred alternative recommends 12.28 million acres—including the Coastal Plain—for designation as wilderness. The Service also recommends four rivers—the Atigun, Hulahula, Kongakut, and Marsh Fork Canning—for inclusion into the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

The Service's revised CCP and final EIS address a variety of needs, including preserving subsistence uses of local inhabitants, protecting fish and wildlife populations and their habitats, and ensuring opportunities for fish- and wildlife-dependent recreation and other public uses. The revised CCP also strengthens wildlife and habitat monitoring as well as the monitoring of public use of the refuge so as to better respond to changing conditions on the landscape, particularly those associated with climate change.

With these points in mind, and pursuant to the Wilderness Act of 1964, I am recommending that the Congress pass legislation making additions to the National Wilderness Preservation System and the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System that the Service proposed as part of the revised CCP and final EIS for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. This area is one of the most beautiful, undisturbed places in the world. It is a national treasure and should be permanently protected through legislation for future generations.

Attached is the letter of recommendation from the Secretary of the Interior and a map of the area.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to John A. Boehner, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate.

The President's Weekly Address
April 4, 2015

This week, together with our allies and partners, we reached a historic understanding with Iran, which, if fully implemented, will prevent it from obtaining a nuclear weapon and make our country, our allies, and our world safer.

This framework is the result of tough, principled diplomacy. It's a good deal, a deal that meets our core objectives, including strict limitations on Iran's program and cutting off every pathway that Iran could take to develop a nuclear weapon.

This deal denies Iran the plutonium necessary to build a bomb. It shuts down Iran's path to a bomb using enriched uranium. Iran has agreed that it will not stockpile the materials needed to build a weapon. Moreover, international inspectors will have unprecedented access to Iran's nuclear program because Iran

will face more inspections than any other country in the world. If Iran cheats, the world will know it. If we see something suspicious, we will inspect it. So this deal is not based on trust, it is based on unprecedented verification.

And this is a long-term deal, with strict limits on Iran's program for more than a decade and unprecedented transparency measures that will last for 20 years or more. And as a member of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, Iran will never be permitted to develop a nuclear weapon.

In return for Iran's actions, the international community, including the United States, has agreed to provide Iran with phased relief from certain sanctions. If Iran violates the deal, sanctions can be snapped back into place. Meanwhile, other American sanctions on Iran for its support of terrorism, its human rights abuses, its ballistic missile program, all will continue to be enforced.

As I said this week, many key details will need to be finalized over the next 3 months, and nothing is agreed to until everything is agreed. And if there is backsliding, there will be no deal.

Here in the United States, I expect a robust debate. We'll keep Congress and the American people fully briefed on the substance of the deal. As we engage in this debate, let's remember, we really only have three options for dealing with Iran's nuclear program: bombing Iran's nuclear facilities, which will only set its program back a few years, while starting another war in the Middle East; abandoning negotiations and hoping for the best with sanctions, even though that's always led to Iran making more progress in its nuclear program; or a robust and verifiable deal like this one that peacefully prevents Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon.

As President and Commander in Chief, I firmly believe that the diplomatic option—a comprehensive, long-term deal like this—is by far the best option, for the United States, for our allies, and for the world.

Our work—this deal—is not yet done. Diplomacy is painstaking work. Success is not guaranteed. But today we have a historic opportunity to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons in Iran and to do so peacefully, with the international community firmly behind us. And this will be our work in the days and months ahead in keeping with the best traditions of American leadership.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 9:45 a.m. on April 3 in Room 130 of Building 1580 at Hill Air Force Base, UT, for broadcast on April 4. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 3, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on April 4.

Remarks at the White House Easter Egg Roll
April 6, 2015

The President. Hello, everybody! Well, happy Easter.

Audience members. Happy Easter!

The President. We are so blessed to have this beautiful day and to have so many friends in our backyard. And Malia and Sasha, they had a little school stuff going on today, but they wanted to send their love. Bo and Sunny are here, along with the Easter Bunny. And this is always one of our favorite events. We hope you guys are having fun.

This is a particularly special Easter Egg Roll because we've actually got a birthday to celebrate. It is the fifth anniversary of the First Lady's "Let's Move!" initiative. And to help us celebrate we've got the outstanding young group, Fifth Harmony, here to help us sing "Happy Birthday." Everybody ready to sing "Happy Birthday"?

All right. Fifth Harmony!

Audience members. Yeah!

Musician Camila Cabello. Thank you so much to the President and First Lady for having us. It is such an honor and so incredibly cool to be singing at the White House. Thank you so much.

Musician Lauren Jauregui. Woo! We're so honored to be here to help sing Mrs. Obama's initiative a happy birthday. We think it's really cool that she helps people all over the Nation want to be active and want to be healthy. It's really awesome.

Musician Normani Hamilton. And because of this special occasion, we wanted to present you guys a birthday cake.

[*At this point, members of Fifth Harmony presented a cake to Mrs. Obama and made brief remarks.*]

The President. Are we ready to sing?
Ms. Cabello. Yes!
The President. Let's do it!
Ms. Cabello. Are you going to sing with us?
The President. Sure.

[*Fifth Harmony sang "Happy Birthday."*]

The President. Yay!
Ms. Hamilton. Happy Easter!
The First Lady. Oh, my God, that was so good! Let's give Fifth Harmony a round of applause. Yay!
The President. Yay!
The First Lady. Well, you guys, welcome to the Easter Egg Roll. And as you've heard, this is the fifth anniversary of "Let's Move!" And we're celebrating by taking over the Easter Egg Roll with hashtag #GimmeFive. And for those of you who don't know about the Gimme Five challenge, that's the fun, exciting way that we're trying to get the whole country to celebrate the fifth birthday of "Let's Move!" And we're asking Americans of all ages to give me five ways they're leading a healthier life: five jumping jacks, eating five new vegetables, maybe doing a Gimme Five dance. You name it. And go on and Instagram it, hashtag #GimmeFive, and then challenge somebody else.

We've had so much fun doing this challenge. Beyoncé has done it. Michael Strahan has done it. Everybody's joining. Ryan Seacrest. So be a part of the movement. It's fun. It's a great way to get everybody moving.

So I want to thank you guys for coming. I want to thank all of the staff and all the volunteers. Give it up for our volunteers——

The President. Yay!

The First Lady. ——who worked so hard to put this together.

And I want you to enjoy this day. Take advantage of all of the great activities, the cooking stage we have over there. I'm going to be over at the main stage in a few minutes, and we're going to be doing the Gimme Five dance with the "So You Think You Can Dance" all-stars and mentors. So I hope you guys have been learning the steps, because we're going to do it over there in just a few minutes. So I hope you join me over there.

We're going to turn this backyard into a huge Gimme Five flash mob. Are you ready for that?

Audience members. Yeah!

The First Lady. All right. Well, with that, we're going to get down there and do some Easter egg rolling. You guys, thank you so much. Have a great time. And Happy Easter! Love you!

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:55 a.m. from the South Portico at the White House. In her remarks, the First Lady referred to musician Beyoncé G. Knowles-Carter; television and radio host Ryan J. Seacrest; and Michael A. Strahan, former defensive end, National Football League's New York Giants.

Remarks at an Easter Prayer Breakfast
April 7, 2015

Vice President Joe Biden. Good morning, everyone, and welcome to the White House. Religious leaders, lay faithful, it's an honor: It's an honor to join you in a morning of prayer and reflection, and it's a delight to have many of you back.

For me, reflection is what Holy Week is all about. And I never fail to get a renewed sense

of hope and possibilities when I attend Mass on Easter Sunday.

I believe Pope Francis got it right in his Easter Vigil homily when he said, and I quote: "We cannot live Easter without entering into mystery. To enter into mystery means the ability to wonder, to contemplate, the ability to listen to the silence and hear the tiny whisper amid the great silence by which God speaks to us."

I think that's who we are as Christians, and quite frankly, I think that's who we are as Americans. We're constantly renewed as a people and as individuals by our ability to enter into the mystery. We live our faith when we instill in our children the ability to wonder, to contemplate, and to listen to that tiny whisper amid the great silence. We live our faith when we nurture the hope and possibilities that has always defined us as a country. We live Easter—and to live Easter is to live—with the constant notion that we can always do better. We can always do better.

That's why I'm so grateful for what everyone in this room does to transform hope into possibilities and possibilities into opportunity. And that's why I've been so honored to work every single day for the last 6-plus years with a man who encompasses that faith to his core. A man who knows what it is to enter into the mystery with a deep and unyielding conviction that it's within each of our reach to make real the promise of the ongoing miracle that is the United States of America.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is my great honor to introduce you to my friend, the President of the United States of America, Barack Obama.

The President. Everybody, have a seat. Thank you. Oh, well, we give thanks for this day that the Lord has made. Good morning, everybody.

Audience members. Good morning.

The President. Welcome to the White House. It is wonderful to see so many friends from all across the country. My first concern was whether you actually got something to eat. [*Laughter*] Sometimes, prayer breakfasts are advertised—[*laughter*]—and then, you get there and there's like a little muffin. [*Laughter*] A couple berries. [*Laughter*] And though your soul may be nourished, you leave hungry. So I hope that is not happening here.

I want to thank everybody here for their prayers, which mean so much to me and Michelle. Particularly at a time when my daughters are starting to grow up—[*laughter*]—and starting to go on college visits, I need prayer. [*Laughter*] I start tearing up in the middle of the day, and I can't explain it. [*Laughter*] Why am I so sad? [*Laughter*] They're leaving me.

And I want to thank everybody here for the wonderful work that you do all across the country with your remarkable ministries.

We hold this Easter Prayer Breakfast every year to take a moment from our hectic lives for some fellowship, friendship, prayer, and reflection. And I know pastors here have had a very busy Holy Week, and so for you to travel here and take the time to spend with us is extraordinary after what I know is difficult. I can't say that our work during this season is comparable, but you should try dealing with thousands of people in your backyard on an Easter Egg Roll. [*Laughter*] After that you need quiet reflection, particularly because I had some of my nephews who—6 and 4—in my house all weekend. And you need quiet reflection after that. [*Laughter*] Girls are different than boys.

This morning we also remember a man of God who we lost this weekend, a man known and loved by many of you, the dean of American preaching: Dr. Gardner C. Taylor. Anybody who had the privilege of hearing him speak knows what power he had. He was a civil rights hero. He was a friend of Dr. King, who used his spellbinding sermons to spread the Gospel and open people's hearts and minds. He taught and mentored countless young ministers. So as we mourn his absence today, we also take solace knowing that he leaves a living legacy and that he is in a better place.

I am no preacher. I can't tell anything to this crowd about Easter that you don't already know. I can offer just a couple of reflections very quickly before we begin the program.

For me, the celebration of Easter puts our earthly concerns into perspective. With humility and with awe, we give thanks to the extraordinary sacrifice of Jesus Christ, our Savior. We

reflect on the brutal pain that He suffered, the scorn that He absorbed, the sins that He bore, this extraordinary gift of salvation that He gave to us. And we try, as best we can, to comprehend the darkness that He endured so that we might receive God's light.

And yet, even as we grapple with the sheer enormity of Jesus' sacrifice, on Easter we can't lose sight of the fact that the story didn't end on Friday.

Audience members. Amen! That's right.

The President. The story keeps on going. On Sunday comes the glorious Resurrection of our Savior.

"Good Friday may occupy the throne for a day," Dr. King once preached, "but ultimately, it must give way to the triumphant beat of the drums of Easter." Drums that beat the rhythm of renewal and redemption, goodness and grace, hope and love. Easter is our affirmation that there are better days ahead and also a reminder that it is on us, the living, to make them so.

Through God's mercy, Peter the Apostle said, we are given "an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you." It's an inheritance that calls on us to be better, to love more deeply, to serve "the least of these" as an expression of Christ's love here on Earth.

That's the spirit we feel in the example of His Holiness Pope Francis, who encourages us to seek peace, to serve the marginalized, and be good stewards of God's creation. Like millions of Americans, I'm honored that we will be welcoming him to our country later this year.

I want to quote him. He says that we should strive "to see the Lord in every excluded person who is thirsty, hungry, naked; to see the Lord present even in those who have lost their faith . . . in the imprisoned, sick, unemployed, persecuted; to see the Lord in the leper—whether in body or soul—who encounters discrimination."

Isn't that how Jesus lived? Isn't that how He loved? Embracing those who were different; serving the marginalized; humbling Himself to the last. This is the example that we are called to follow: to love Him with all our hearts and mind and soul and to love our neighbors—and all of our neighbors—as ourselves. As it says in the first letter of John, "Let us not love with words or speech, but with actions and in truth."

On Easter, I do reflect on the fact that as a Christian, I am supposed to love. And I have to say that sometimes, when I listen to less than loving expressions by Christians——

Audience member. Well, well. Preach!

The President. ——I get concerned. But that's a topic for another day. [*Laughter*]

Where there is injustice—I was about to veer off. [*Laughter*] I'm pulling it back. Where there is injustice, we defend the oppressed.

Audience member. Preach!

The President. [*Laughter*] Where there is disagreement, we treat each other with compassion and respect. Where there are differences, we find strength in our common humanity, knowing that we are all children of God.

So today, we celebrate the magnificent glory of our risen Savior. I pray that we will live up to His example. I pray that I will live up to His example. I fall short so often. Every day, I try to do better. I pray that we will be strengthened by His eternal love. I pray that we will be worthy of His many blessings.

With that, I'd like to invite Reverend Dr. Amy Butler to offer our opening prayer.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:30 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to his nephews Aaron and Austin L. Robinson; and Amy K. Butler, senior minister, Riverside Church in New York City.

Remarks Following a Roundtable Discussion on Climate Change and Public Health at Howard University
April 7, 2015

The President. I just had the opportunity to have a terrific conversation with our outstanding new Surgeon General, Vivek Murthy, our EPA Administrator, Gina McCarthy, but also some incredible activists from different walks of life in the public health arena. And the discussion really centered around the fact that climate change is having a impact on our public health.

We've got nurses. We've got deans of medical schools. We have residents and public health officials, primary care physicians and moms, most importantly. And what we know is that the temperature of the planet is rising. And we know that in addition to the adverse impacts that may have when it comes to more frequent hurricanes or more powerful storms or increased flooding, we also know that it has an impact on public health.

We know that if there are more wildfires, a consequence of rising temperatures, that there are going to be more particulates in the air. We know that potentially, it extends the allergy season and can induce greater incidents of asthma or more severe incidents of asthma. We know that, potentially, as temperatures rise, that we're going to start seeing insect-borne diseases that are not traditional to North America start moving up from the south.

And so there are a whole host of public health impacts that are going to hit home. And the great thing about this conversation is to see all the work that's already being done by public health officials, the medical community, nurses, and families to start raising awareness around these issues.

The Pentagon has already said that climate change is a primary national security threat that we're going to face, and we are working with the Department of Defense to start preparing for that and mitigating for that. And a lot of our international policy and national security policy is centered around the very real concerns that that's going to raise.

But we also know that it's going to have an impact on our public health. And through the efforts of these individuals and organizations around the country, I think we're going to be able to start having an impact.

We'll just use the example of Charlotte Wallace, a pediatric nurse in Maryland for 18 years, treated kids with asthma. And as a nurse and a mom, she understands that climate change is going to be making a difference. Dr. Bryant-Stephens, who is a primary care physician, has seen firsthand how rising asthma rates, particularly in lower-income communities, can have a terrible impact.

So we've got to do better in protecting vulnerable Americans. Ultimately, though, all of our families are going to be vulnerable. You can't cordon yourself off from air or from climate.

And that's why today we're making more than 150 data sets on climate change in public health from agencies like the CDC open to the public. Companies across the country like Google and Microsoft plan to use the data to generate apps and tools that can help communities educate and protect themselves.

We have medical schools, including Howard, and public health schools pledging to train their students in the health impacts of climate change. And later this week, some of those educators will come to the White House to talk about how they're incorporating climate change into their teachings, into their curriculum. And this spring, we'll have a climate change and health summit at the White House.

So the bottom line is, we all need to do our part. Obviously, this administration has been aggressive in using the administrative authorities that we currently have to increase fuel efficiency standards to make sure that we are taking more carbon out of the emissions from our power plants. But we've got a lot more work to do if we're going to deal with this problem in an effective way and make sure that our families and our kids are safe.

And one of the key leaders in this is going to be our Surgeon General, Dr. Murthy. So, Vivek, why don't you say a few words.

U.S. Surgeon General Vivek H. Murthy. Sure. Well, thank you, Mr. President. Thank you, Administrator McCarthy. And my thanks to all of you who joined us here today.

We had a really enriching conversation today talking about the impact of climate change on public health from a number of different perspectives. It was very helpful to us. And I'd like to expand a little on what the President said and speak a little bit more about the relevance of climate change to clinicians and to patients.

We know that climate change means higher temperatures overall, and it also means longer and hotter heat waves. We also know that higher temperatures can mean worse air in cities and more smog and more ozone. We know that more intense wildfires will mean increased smoke in the air. And we know that earlier springs and longer summers mean longer allergy seasons.

If you put all of this together, this means that we have more people exposed to triggers that can cause asthma attacks, and more asthma attacks mean more days of school missed. They mean more days of work missed. They mean more costly trips to the doctor. And they most importantly mean more scary moments for parents and for children.

This is a personal issue for me because when I was young one of my favorite uncles—actually, he was very dear to me as a child—he died from a severe asthma attack. And it's also personal to me because I have cared for many patients over the years who have suffered from asthma and have seen firsthand how frightening it can be to suddenly be wheezing and fighting for every breath. Asthma can be very difficult for patients, but also for their families. And the impacts of climate change could make this situation worse.

Additionally, the longer summers and hotter heat waves will also expose more Americans to heat stroke and to heat stress, especially those who work in outdoor settings in industries like farming and construction. And it means that elderly Americans will be even more vulnerable to respiratory distress and possible death from extreme heat, a problem that we already experience in our cities, particularly among the poor and minority populations who don't always have easy access to air conditioning.

An underlying principle of public health that I want to emphasize is that of prevention. Indeed, prevention of disease should be the driving force in our efforts to improve health in America. And whether it's promoting heart health through nutrition and physical activity or preventing disease outbreaks through vaccinations, prevention really is our goal, and that is true here with climate change as well.

As Surgeon General, one of my larger messages to our country is that we all have a stake in health. And as a result, we all have a responsibility to protect it. Health isn't just the responsibility of doctors and nurses and individual patients, it's a community responsibility. That means that businesses and faith groups, civic organization, schools and universities like this—all of American society has a hand in keeping our people healthy and preventing disease not just treating it, and in making sure that every American, no matter who they are or where they're from, has a shot at a healthy life.

So again, we're very grateful to have had this opportunity to speak with our community leaders here today. And we're excited to continue this conversation as we think about how to address some of the challenges that we now see with climate change and public health.

Thank you all very much.

The President. Last point I'll make, because Vivek touched on this—when we have, as Dr. Bryant-Stephens mentioned, a child who visits the emergency room six times because of asthma, there's a cost associated to that. We as a society pay for that. And even if the child has insurance, it is still resources that are being devoted to treating a child that could have avoided an emergency room visit if we took better care of the environment in which they were growing up.

And the reason I think this is important is because sometimes you'll hear the debate

when it comes to climate change that this is going to be too costly to address. Well, the fact of the matter is, we know that the costs of clean energy have rapidly come down and are increasingly competitive; that when—in historically, we have dealt with problems like smog or acid rain or the ozone, it's turned out that things are cheaper to fix than we anticipated, and——

[*At this point, a cell phone rang.*]

The President. Whoa! Who's calling there, Ms. Miller?

Moms Clean Air Force volunteer Eneshal Miller. My husband.

The President. Uh-oh. Tell your husband I'm in the middle of a press conference. [*Laughter*] I'm teasing.

So the—what has turned out typically is, is that the costs have been lower than anticipated. The benefits have been extraordinary. Hard to put a price on in some cases, and in some cases, we can be very clear about how much it costs. And when it comes to public health issues, when we're doing effective work on prevention, and we are preventing tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands of asthma incidents, or we are preventing thousands of deaths as a consequence of asthma, that is something that we know is not only preventable when it comes to the individual, but it's something where we could be saving money as a society as a whole.

And so I want everybody to start recognizing the costs of inaction and recognize that the costs of inaction are even higher than the costs of action. In the same way that there are costs associated when you have severe drought or significant wildfires or the kinds of storm surges that we saw in Hurricane Sandy, well, there are public health costs as well. And we're ultimately going to be better off being proactive, getting out in front of this thing, as opposed to reactive where we pay a whole lot more in pain and suffering as well as in terms of trying to deal with the back end of the problem. All right?

Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:31 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Charlotte Wallace, pediatric nurse and sustainability coordinator, Anne Arundel Medical Center; and Tyra Bryant-Stephens, founder, Community Asthma Prevention Program of Philadelphia.

Statement on the 21st Anniversary of the Genocide in Rwanda
April 7, 2015

Twenty-one years ago today, a genocide began that would claim the lives of more than 800,000 Rwandan men, women, and children and mark the beginning of 100 days of horror for Rwanda's people. Today is a day to commemorate those who lost their lives, to honor the courage of those who risked their lives to save others, and to grieve with the Rwandan people. It is also a day to reaffirm what our common humanity demands: that we stand together to prevent mass atrocities and continue to do all we can to make good on the pledge of "never again." We also renew our commitment to help finish the task of bringing to justice those who inflicted such tragedy upon such a beautiful land.

While we remain haunted by the genocide, we also draw hope and inspiration from the people of Rwanda, who are building a brighter future. We commend their determination to continue to make important progress toward healing old wounds and lifting people out of poverty. The United States will continue to work tirelessly in partnership with Rwanda and with other nations to help prevent such atrocities and advance dignity and peace for all.

Statement on Representative Lois Capps's Decision Not To Seek Reelection
April 8, 2015

Lois Capps and her family have served the people of California's Central Coast for almost four decades. For 20 years, she was a nurse and public health advocate while her husband Walter served in Congress. When Walter tragically passed away, Lois ran for his seat in Congress, and for the past 17 years, she has continued his legacy of service while leaving a lasting legacy of her own. She has led efforts to increase access to health care, improve mental health services, detect and prevent domestic violence, protect our environment, and improve education, all while consistently being voted the "nicest Member of Congress." Her experience, optimism, and tenacity will be missed, but I look forward to working with Congresswoman Capps over the next 2 years, and Michelle and I wish her all the best in her future endeavors.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Somalia
April 8, 2015

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13536 of April 12, 2010, with respect to Somalia is to continue in effect beyond April 12, 2015.

On January 17, 2013, the United States Government announced its recognition of the Government of Somalia. On February 24, 2015, I nominated the first U.S. Ambassador to Somalia in over two decades. Although these developments demonstrate progress with respect to Somalia's stabilization, they do not remove the importance of U.S. sanctions, especially against persons undermining the stability of Somalia. For this reason, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency with respect to Somalia and to maintain in force the sanctions to respond to this threat.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to John A. Boehner, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate. The letter referred to U.S. Ambassador to Somalia Katherine Simonds Dhanani. The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Prime Minister Portia L. Simpson-Miller of Jamaica and an Exchange With Reporters in Kingston, Jamaica
April 9, 2015

[*Prime Minister Simpson-Miller's remarks were joined in progress.*]

Prime Minister Simpson-Miller. ——both local and overseas. Thank you for being with us today to witness this memorable chapter in Jamaica-U.S. relations.

The historic meeting held today with the Honorable Barack Obama, President of the United States of America, sends a positive

signal of the strong bilateral relationship that exists between Jamaica and the United States of America. These relations are anchored in our strong democratic traditions and the historical and cultural bonds that unite our peoples.

The importance of—to Jamaica of our relations with the United States of America must be clearly understood. The U.S.A. is Jamaica's leading trading partner, main tourism market, and a chief source of foreign direct investment. The U.S.A. is home to the largest Jamaican diaspora. The main aim of our dialogue, therefore, was to further strengthen a partnership that existed long before the formal establishment of diplomatic relations in 1962.

During our bilateral meeting, I renewed the high levels of regard which Jamaica has for the United States of America. I also expressed to President Obama and the Government of the United States, on behalf of the Government and people of Jamaica, our gratitude for the high levels of support provided by the United States to Jamaica over the years.

Central to our discussions were the elements of Jamaica's performance under the current extended fund facility with the IMF and the positive outlook for the future. As Jamaica builds on the gains made so far under the program with the Fund, we recognize that we renew our commitment to the economic reform program going forward.

We also discussed strengthening our cooperation in the areas of security and human resource development. We explored additional ways of improving our trade and economic relations, including through capacity building for our private sector as well as in the areas of energy security and renewable energy.

One of the outcomes of the President's visit is the signing by our respective Ministers of Energy of a statement of intent between Jamaica and the United States of America to pursue the development and deployment of energy-related technologies. And I want to thank you, Mr. President, so much and your Government.

Through this statement of intent we aim to encourage increased bilateral trade, boost the development of emerging technologies and industries, and pave the way for future innovation in energy-related fields.

Other areas of our deliberations centered on regional and hemispheric developments, including relations with our closest neighbor, Cuba, and our expectations for the Summit of the Americas. And here again, I want to thank the President of the United States for action taken in terms of Cuba and to say to the President we're very happy and to say to you, Mr. President, you are on the right side of history.

The President and I and our teams also used the opportunity to have brief exchanges on multilateral development issues. And he has some serious concern, as well as Jamaica, in terms of climate change and financing for development and post-'15 development agenda.

I want to once again thank you, Mr. President, for visiting with us. And I just want to say to you, you might not know, but you're very loved in this country, Jamaica. And I just want to indicate to you that last night, while I was getting back home, the streets—people had lined the streets on the route they thought that you would be driving last night. [*Laughter*] So I had to give all the waves for you and threw the kisses—[*laughter*]—to all the people that were out at that time, just waiting to get a glimpse of your vehicle. So I just want to say you're well loved in Jamaica.

Well, first of all, I can say to you publicly, I love you, and ask for you to pass on my best wishes to your beautiful wife. And I'm sorry she was not able to make the—this visit with you—but to thank you so much. And you might not understand how important this is for us as a country and, certainly, will be important for our CARICOM region. And I thank you very much.

President Obama. Good. Well, thank you so much.

Let me just, first of all, say it is an extraordinary pleasure to be in beautiful Jamaica. There is a long history between our two peoples. It is not just a deep friendship between states, but it is also a family bond that exists, as represented by the many Americans who come here to visit and enjoy Jamaican hospitality, but also

the extraordinary Jamaican American community that has done so much to contribute to the growth and development of our country.

And I want to thank Prime Minister Portia Simpson-Miller for her hospitality and her team. I know it's always a lot of work when I come to visit someplace, and I think that everybody has treated us with wonderful hospitality. And we very, very much appreciate that.

I assure you that Michelle wishes she was on this trip—[*laughter*]—although, she would insist that I stay longer than one day. [*Laughter*] And so we'll have to return with the girls sometime in the future. [*Applause*] She would also applaud for that. [*Laughter*]

As Madam Prime Minister indicated, we had a lot to talk about. First and foremost, we discussed how much we support the ongoing reform efforts in Jamaica to deal with its public debt while still making investments in youth and the people of Jamaica, which ultimately will determine long-term growth, to strengthen good governance and rule of law.

And I want to thank Prime Minister Simpson-Miller for the hospitality when the CARICOM leaders come today. Many of the issues that Jamaica deals with are issues that exist across the Caribbean. And so what we want to do is find out how we can be an even more constructive partner in addressing some of these issues.

One area that we've spent a lot of time focusing on and will discuss further with the other CARICOM leaders is the area of energy, where oftentimes, people of the Caribbean, despite having less resources, are paying significantly higher prices for energy. And if we can lower those costs through the development of clean energy and increased energy efficiency, we could unleash, I think, a whole host of additional investment and growth. And I think there are going to be a whole host of areas where the United States can be helpful.

We also addressed the issue of climate change, which obviously many island nations are most concerned about. And we have an important conference in Paris later this year. We began to discuss how we can cooperate further to deal with this issue that will affect generations of Jamaicans and Americans for years to come.

We spent time talking about trade and how we can expand trade in the region and internationally. And we spent a lot of time talking about young people, because one of the best ways to ensure growth and prosperity is by empowering more of our citizens. Today's town hall meeting that I'll be having with young people from the region, we're going to be discussing how we can support entrepreneurship, more student exchanges, more effective job training, and at the same time, how we can support human rights, equality, and the dignity of all people.

And finally, we spent some time talking about security cooperation. Jamaica, historically, has had a very capable security effort, but strains are being placed on Jamaica, just like is true across the Caribbean, as the transnational drug trade continues to make moves to try to expand its reach or where it feels displaced from other areas. And so strengthening our cooperation, making sure that training, equipment, coordination, intelligence—that we are in sync, I think, is going to be very important. And I look forward to our efforts there as well.

So, in summary, it's been an excellent discussion. And I want to thank the people of Jamaica for their outstanding hospitality. I will say that the quick trip that I made last night to Bob Marley's house was one of the more fun meetings that I've had since I've been President, as a big fan since I was in high school, and is indicative of the incredible spirit of the Jamaican people.

So thank you very much, Madam Prime Minister. And with that, I know we're going to take a question from each delegation.

Prime Minister Simpson-Miller. Yes, yes. Can we—Mr. Earl Maxom [RJR Communications Group]. Yes.

Q. Thank you very much, Prime Minister. Earl Maxom of the RJR Communications Group. [*Inaudible*]—Prime Minister, did you explore with President Obama some of the measures that might be pursued to ensure that Jamaica does not suffer any negative consequences from that which it has long advocated:

the easing and ultimate lifting of the American embargo on Cuba? And. furthermore, are there going to be any specific new measures in stemming the flow of American guns into Jamaica, which has negative consequences?

Prime Minister Simpson-Miller. Well, we—as the President indicated, we discussed national security, and all of those things—that would be included in the discussion in terms of our national security. Both the U.S. and Jamaica, we're very concerned. The United States of America would not want for illegal guns to be entering our airports, our seaports, or by any other means. And in the same way, Jamaica would not want to have guns coming into our country—illegal guns coming into our country. And we've always been united against guns, illegal weapons entering our country and coming from any other country. So there's no need for us to worry about that, only to continue our serious monitoring of our borders, our airports, and our seaports.

But I was very satisfied with the discussion that I had in that area with the President.

President Obama. Okay. Julie Davis [New York Times].

U.S. Department of State's List of State Sponsors of Terrorism/Cuba/Iran

Q. Thank you. Mr. President, is it your view that it's time for Cuba to be removed from the list of State Sponsors of Terrorism? Have you gotten that recommendation from the State Department, and are you planning to act on it while you're in the region? And beyond that, if I might, how confident are you that you're going to be able to push forward with this opening with Cuba at the same time that you're trying to make the case for the nuclear deal with Iran?

President Obama. As you know, there's a process involved in reviewing whether or not a country should be on the State Sponsor of Terrorism list. That review has been completed at the State Department. It is now forwarded to the White House. Our interagency team will go through the entire thing and then present it to me with a recommendation. That hasn't happened yet.

The one thing I will say is that throughout this process, our emphasis has been on the facts. So we want to make sure that given that this is a powerful tool to isolate those countries that genuinely do support terrorism, that when we make those designations we've got strong evidence that, in fact, that's the case. And as circumstances change, then, that list will change as well. So I won't make a formal announcement today about what those recommendations are. I'll wait until I've received them.

In terms of the overall process of establishing diplomatic relations with Cuba, I think that they are proceeding as I expected. I never foresaw that immediately overnight, everything would transform itself, that suddenly Cuba became a partner diplomatically with us the way Jamaica is, for example. That's going to take some time.

I do think that we'll be in a position to move forward on the opening of Embassies in respective countries. There are details and negotiations around that. Cuba has moved forward in the negotiations that they've had with our State Department, consistent with what we announced back in December.

And so my expectation is, is that during the course of this year and into next year, you'll see a series of steps and measures that are taken to build trust and to establish genuine dialogue. There will still be significant differences given their system of government, given their positions on some of the issues in the region. But we're confident that this process of engagement will ultimately lead to not just improved diplomatic relations between the United States and Cuba, but will also end up being beneficial for the Cuban people and give them the kinds of opportunities that they might not have in the past.

I—there was an interesting poll that was released just over the last several days showing overwhelming support within Cuba for this process. I think there is a great interest among ordinary Cubans to be able to put one era behind them and to be able to move forward and have the kinds of relationships with the United States and the rest of the world that is reflec-

tive of the fact that we have an integrated, 21st-century global economy and that they have to be a part of it.

I don't think that will have an impact on Iran. I think people recognize those are two separate issues. The issue with respect to Iran is very focused on a particular problem, and that is making sure that Iran doesn't possess nuclear weapons and that the Middle East doesn't embark on a nuclear arms race. That's in everybody's interest. As I said before, I am confident that the framework that was established, thanks to the hard work of our negotiating team and serious concessions on the part of the Iranians, and the unity of the P5-plus-1 and the world community behind sanctions, all give us now the possibility of achieving our goal without potential military conflict.

But as I've said from the start, this is not done until it's done. And the next two to three months in negotiations are going to be absolutely critical for making sure that we are memorializing an agreement that gives us confidence and gives the world confidence that Iran, in fact, is not pursuing a nuclear weapon. If that is the case, then Iran, I think, will benefit from its economy being open to the global economy.

And ultimately, what we want to see is prosperity for the Iranian people, but we also want to make sure that our allies in the region have confidence that they're not going to be threatened by the looming cloud of a nuclear Iran. And we're going to make sure that that happens, hopefully, through diplomatic means.

All right? Thank you so much, everybody.

Prime Minister Simpson-Miller. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 10:50 a.m. in the Cabinet Room at Jamaica House. In her remarks, Prime Minister Simpson-Miller referred to Minister of Science, Technology, Energy, and Mining Phillip Paulwell of Jamaica.

Remarks During a Meeting With Leaders of the Caribbean Community and Common Market in Mona, Jamaica
April 9, 2015

Well, thank you very much. Let me begin, once again, by thanking Prime Minister Portia Simpson-Miller for—and the people of Jamaica for their wonderful hospitality, as well as the University. I want to thank the Chair of CARICOM, Prime Minister Christie of the Bahamas, and all the leaders and their teams that are here today.

As has already been mentioned, the bonds between us are extraordinarily strong. The Caribbean is a place of extraordinary beauty, people of enormous spirit, unique talents, a wonderful culture. We are bound by friendship and shared values and by family. And we have a great stake in each other's success.

We last met as a group at the Summit of the Americas in Cartagena. We work together every Summit of the Americas, as we will again in Panama. And I wanted to meet today so that we could take some time to focus on the unique opportunities and challenges that this region faces.

We're going to have a chance to talk about the issues that have already been mentioned: making sure that we deepen our cooperation in economic growth and how we can further integrate the region; making sure that our governments are open and transparent, and upholding human rights for all citizens; combating transnational crime through our Caribbean Basin Security Initiative. And a particular focus today is going to be one of the greatest barriers to development in the Caribbean, and that is expensive, often unreliable, and carbon-intensive energy.

This region has some of the highest energy costs in the world. Caribbean countries are particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, and we have to act now. This is an example of—large countries and small countries have to work together, because without

collective action, we're not going to be able to address these challenges.

The Vice President hosted a summit on this in January. Our Caribbean Energy Security Initiative aims to help move the region toward cleaner more affordable energy. Today we're announcing new partnerships, including a new fund to mobilize private investment in clean energy projects in the Caribbean and in Central America. And I'm confident that given the commitment of the CARICOM countries and the U.S. commitment, that this is an issue in which we can make great strides over the short term and even greater strides over the long term.

Finally, let me mention the issue of youth. As you indicated, if there's one thing that I've been convinced of during the course of my 6½ years in office, it is that wherever we are able to harness the spirit and innovation and boldness of our youth and channel that in a positive direction, those countries succeed, and our futures will be bright. And that is true here in the Caribbean and throughout the Americas.

And so I'm very much looking forward to a town hall meeting I'll be hosting in which young leaders from all your countries will attend. But more importantly, we're going to be very interested in building some concrete programs that give them the kind of education and training that will ultimately help to benefit not only your countries, but will benefit the world.

And with that, let me suggest that we get to work. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:47 p.m. in the Regional Headquarters Building of the University of the West Indies, Mona–Western Jamaica Campus.

Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session at a Young Leaders of the Americas Initiative Town Hall Meeting in Mona
April 9, 2015

The President. Greetings, massive! [*Laughter*] Hey! *Wah gwaan,* Jamaica? Can everybody please give Aubrey a big round of applause for the great introduction? I want to thank the University of the West Indies for hosting us. Big up, You-Wee! Thank you. Yes, I've been making myself at home here. [*Laughter*]

It is great to be in beautiful Jamaica, not only because I'm proud to be the first President of the United States to visit in more than 30 years, but because I just like the vibe here. See, I was born on an island, and it was warm, and so I feel right at home.

And I'm grateful for the warm Jamaican hospitality that I received this morning, including from Prime Minister Simpson-Miller. I also had the chance to meet with leaders from across the Caribbean, where we focused on issues of shared prosperity and shared security. And tomorrow I'll meet with leaders from across the hemisphere at the Summit of the Americas in Panama.

But before my trip became all business, I wanted to come here and hear from young people like you. Because it is your generation who will shape the future of our countries and our region and this planet that we share long after those of us who are currently in public service are gone from the stage. So I'm going to only speak for a few minutes at the top, because I'd rather spend time taking questions from you, and also because after we have a chance for our town hall, I get a chance to say hi to Usain Bolt and Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce. And the—when you have the fastest people on the planet, you've got to say hi to them, right? Because that's fast. [*Laughter*] There are a lot of people out there, and they're the fastest. [*Laughter*]

Now, we are not just nations, we're also neighbors. Tens of millions of Americans are bound to the Caribbean and the Americas through ties of commerce, but also ties of kin. More than 1 million Americans trace their ancestry to Jamaica. More than 1 million Americans visit Jamaica each year. So we're commit-

ted to you and this region. And as I've said before, in our foreign policy there are no senior or junior partners in the Americas, there are just partners.

And that's one reason why the United States has started a new chapter in our relations with the people of Cuba. We will continue to have some differences with the Cuban Government, but we don't want to be imprisoned by the past. When something doesn't work for 50 years, you don't just keep on doing it, you try something new. And we are as committed as ever to supporting human rights and political freedom in Cuba and around the world. But I believe that engagement is a more powerful force than isolation and the changes we are making can help improve the lives of the Cuban people. And I also believe that this new beginning will be good for the United States and the entire hemisphere.

My point is, I believe we can move past some of the old debates that so often define the region and move forward in a way that benefits your generation with new thinking, an energetic, impatient, dynamic, and diverse generation that you represent, both in the United States and across this hemisphere. More than a hundred million people in Latin America and the Caribbean are between the ages of 15 and 24. Most of the region is under 35.

And what gives me so much hope about your generation is that you're more interested in the hard work of waging peace than resorting to the quick impulses of conflict. You're more interested in the hard work of building prosperity through entrepreneurship, not cronyism or corruption. You're more eager for progress that comes not by holding down any segment of society, but by holding up the rights of every human being, regardless of what we look like or how we pray or who we love.

You care less about the world as it has been and more about the world as it should be and can be. And unlike any other time in our history, the technology at your disposal means that you don't have to wait for the change that you're looking for; you have the freedom to create it in your own powerful and disruptive ways. Many of you already have, whether by starting your own enterprises or by helping others start theirs.

And I'm going to just single out two remarkable young leaders who are here today because I think they're an example of what is possible, even in the most difficult of circumstances. So Angeline Jackson is here today. Is Angeline—where is Angeline? There she is, right there. So several years ago, when Angeline was 19, she and a friend were kidnapped, held at gunpoint, and sexually assaulted. And as a woman and as a lesbian, justice and society were not always on her side. But instead of remaining silent, she chose to speak out and started her own organization to advocate for women like her and get them treatment and get them justice and push back against stereotypes and give them some sense of their own power.

And she became a global activist. But more than anything, she cares about her Jamaica and making it a place where everybody, no matter their color or their class or their sexual orientation, can live in equality and opportunity. That's the power of one person, what they can do.

Jerome Cowans grew up in a tough part of Kingston. Where's Jerome? When Jerome was 12, he saw a friend gunned down. When he looked at the shooters, he said: "I realized that wasn't a life I wanted to live. They had expensive machinery, but they had nothing else." So at the ripe old age of 13, he founded a youth group to help others like him stay on the right path. And he started small, with only six people, but they had one big thing in common, and they believed that change was possible.

And like Angeline, he was threatened for his work, but he kept at it. And he said, "Things won't get any better if no one does anything." And today, the LEAD Youth Club he started has six chapters, including one in Colombia. His work has taken him to five continents. Last year, he became the first Jamaican to receive the Nelson Mandela Innovation Award. He's just 25 years old.

So individuals like those two young people—the young people here today—you remind me of something that Bob Marley once said. You know I went to his house yesterday.

[*Laughter*] I thought, I'm only 5 minutes from his house, I got to go check it out. [*Laughter*] And one of the displays has to do when he was shot right before a concert he was supposed to give, trying to bring the political factions in Jamaica together. And he was treated for his wounds, and he went ahead with the program, went ahead with the show. And somebody asked, well, why would you do that? He said: "The people who are trying to make this world worse are not taking the day off. Why should I?" Why should I?

So none of us can afford to take the day off. And I want you to have every chance, every tool you need to make this world better. So today I'm announcing nearly $70 million in U.S. investments in education, training, and employment programs for our young people throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. And these investments will help young people in unemployed and impoverished and marginalized communities and give them a chance to gain the skills they need to compete and succeed in the 21st-century economy.

And that's not all. As President, some of the initiatives I'm most proud of are ones that increase my country's engagement with the next generation of leaders like Angeline and Jerome and all of you, leaders in government and civil society and entrepreneurship and the private sector. Four years ago, I launched an initiative called 100,000 Strong in the Americas. And the goal was to have 100,000 U.S. students studying in this region and 100,000 of this region's students studying in the United States by the end of this decade. And we are on track to meet that goal.

So today, to build on that progress, I'm proud to launch the Young Leaders of the Americas Initiative right here in Kingston. And let me say this. This is not your traditional exchange. We're going to seek out the most innovative young entrepreneurs and civil society leaders in the Caribbean, Latin America, and we're going to give them a chance to earn a substantial continuing of the training and the resources and the connections, the networks and the capital that you need to make a difference.

So this year, we'll bring two dozen entrepreneurs and civil society leaders from Latin America and the Caribbean—including young Cuban leaders—to the United States. Then, next year, we'll increase this fellowship to 250 young leaders. And we'll help you to expand your commercial and social ventures; we'll embed you in an American business and incubators. We'll give U.S. participants the chance to continue their collaboration with you in your home countries.

So the idea is, is that you'll get a chance to implement your ideas, but now have linkages that give you access to capital and research and all the things you need to mobilize and implement the kinds of things that you're doing.

And this isn't charity for us. This is an investment in your future, because that means it's an investment in our future. A future where climate researchers in the Amazon can collaborate with scientists in Alaska; an idea in Barbados suddenly can be developed in an incubator in Boston; antigang activities in Honduras can be connected to similar activities in Houston, Texas. It's a future where any kid from Kingston can choose a path that opens his or her horizons beyond their neighborhood to the wider world.

And that impulse to make the world better, to push back on those who try to make it worse, that's something that your generation has to hold on to. And you have to remember, it's never easy; there are no days off. But if there's one thing that I know from my own life, it's that with hard work and with hope, change is always within our reach.

The Jamaican-American poet Claude McKay, who was a central figure of the Harlem Renaissance, once wrote something along those lines: "We must strive on to gain the height although it may not be in sight." As long as we've got young strivers like you—and I hope to see you in Washington as part of this Young Leaders of the Americas Initiative—I'm confident that brighter future will always be in sight.

So thank you very much. With that, let's take some questions. All right? So—[*inaudible*].

Not yet? Testing? There we—everybody can hear me? All right, since we're getting to work,

I'm going to take my jacket off and get comfortable. [*Inaudible*] All right. There are no rules to this except that there are people with microphones in the audience, so wait for them to come when I call on you. We're going to go boy, girl, boy, girl so everybody gets a chance, so it's fair. [*Laughter*]

Before your question, please introduce yourself and tell us where you are from, okay? And try to keep your question or comment relatively short so we can get more questions or comments in, okay? We will start with this young lady right here in the white blouse. It's a little tight here so.

Cuba/Caribbean Community and Common Market

Q. Thank you. Yani Campbell, a lecturer at the University of the West Indies. Thank you so much for your talk, very interesting. And I wondered as well, on the Cuban issue, now that your policy has actually changed towards Cuba, I wondered about your views on how it is that we should approach—CARICOM should approach its relationship with Cuba in terms of deepening that relationship. Should they now perhaps move to join in CARICOM? Thank you.

The President. Well, first of all, I think CARICOM can make its own decisions, and we'll respect it. Cuba will be participating in the Summit of the Americas, and I think—it is my strong belief that if we engage, that that offers the greatest prospect for escaping some of the constraints of the past.

I think the Cuban people are extraordinary and have huge potential. And what's encouraging is, is that the overwhelming majority of Cubans are interested in ending the cold war—the last vestige of the cold war—and moving forward. It's going to take some time for the United States to fully implement some of the things that have already been agreed to, and it's going to take a little bit longer before you actually have complete normal relations between the United States and Cuba.

What I would say to Caribbean countries is, absolutely, you should continue to engage in Cuba in the ways that you've already done—you've already done in the past. I do think that it is important for all of us to be able to speak honestly where we see concerns about issues of human rights and political freedom. And I'm not saying anything publicly that I haven't said directly to Raúl Castro. There are still constraints on the ability of the Cuban people to express themselves or to organize political parties or to start a business. And sometimes, we'll—the same things we expect for ourselves and our country, somehow, we think other people don't want.

But I believe that each country—I believe each country has its own unique cultures, its own unique traditions. I don't expect every country to pursue the same policies or have the same political practices as the United States. And I am certainly aware of the flaws that exist in our own country that we have to fix. But I do believe there are certain principles that are universal. I think that all people want basic dignity and want basic freedom and want to be able to worship as they please without being discriminated against, or they should be able to speak their mind about an important issue pertaining to their community without being arrested. And so wherever we see that, we try to speak out.

But what we also try to do is engage and recognize that even with countries that we have differences, there's also going to be commonality and overlap. And the United States and Cuba should both have an interest in dealing with climate change, for example, because when the oceans start lapping up on Miami or on Havana, nobody is going to distinguish, well, where do they stand on this or that ideological issue? And so we have to find where there are areas of cooperation, but I will continue to try to be consistent in speaking out on behalf of the issues that are important to all people, not just some. Okay? Good.

All right, it's a gentleman's turn. This gentleman right here. He looks very serious; he's got glasses and looking sharp. Plus, he's got a copy of my book. [*Laughter*]

Q. Thank you, sir.

The President. So he's clearly a wise man.

Recession of 2008–2009

Q. Thank you very much. My name is Chef Brian Lumley. I'm a young Jamaican chef here. And I own a restaurant, 689 by Brian Lumley. [*Laughter*] Just saying.

My question to you—I'm going to stay a little bit off the politics for a bit. And I've witnessed your journey a lot, and it's—the question is kind of two part. If you could go back and give yourself one piece of advice before the start of your 2008 term, what would it be? And the second part is could you sign this book when you're finished. [*Laughter*] Thank you very much.

The President. I'll sign the book. So the question was, for those who couldn't hear: If I were to go back and give myself advice before I started in 2008, what would the advice be?

I suppose I could have started dying my hair earlier—[*laughter*]—so then people wouldn't say, man, he's getting old. You're going like this—at least I've got hair, man. [*Laughter*] I'm teasing you. I'm messing with you.

I think that—keep in mind that when I came into office, we were going through the worst global financial crisis since the 1930s, and so we had to make a series of decisions very quickly, many of which were unpopular. Overall, I think we got it right. I think we did the right thing. And because, I think, we took these steps, not only were we able to avoid the kind of Great Depression that we saw in the 1930s, not only was America able to bounce back and start growing more rapidly than most of our peers, drive down unemployment faster, create more jobs faster, but that also had an impact on the global economy, and it had an impact on the Caribbean economy, that we were able to bounce back quicker than we might not—than we might have if we hadn't taken those steps.

But it was, I think, costly politically. And what I would have probably advised was that I might have needed to warn the American people and paint a picture for them that was more accurate about the fact that it would take some time to dig ourselves out of a very big hole. Because FDR, when he came into office, the Great Depression had already been going on for 2, 3 years, and so people understood how serious it was. With us, we came in just as people were really starting to feel the impacts. And trying to paint a picture that, we'll make it, but it's going to take some time, and here are the steps that we need to take—I think I would have advised myself to do a better job spending more time not just getting the policy right, but also describing it in ways that people understood, that gave them confidence in their own future. I think that would probably be the most important advice that I would have given myself. So, good.

All right, it's a young lady's turn. That young lady right there. Yes, you. You, yes. Oh, well, I'll call on both of you. I'll call on you later. Go ahead.

The President's Temperament

Q. Okay, so we're here and we're looking at you, and we're all very honored to be here and very taken up by your leadership qualities. And seeing that you are the President of the United States of America and you're so influential, I want to know how you handle the mental strain that comes with being in charge of so much.

The President. What's your name?

Q. Kimberly. Kimberly McDermott from the University of the West Indies.

The President. Fantastic. How do I handle stress? [*Laughter*] You know, I'll be honest with you. One of the things that happens as you get older is, you start appreciating both your strengths and your weaknesses. Hopefully, you gain a little wisdom about what you're good at and what you're not. And Michelle can give you a long list of things I'm not good at. [*Laughter*] But one thing that I've always had, which has served me well, is a pretty good temperament. And I attribute that partly from growing up on an island with trade winds and beaches, and it makes you calm. But I try not to get too high when things are going well so that I don't get too low when things are going badly and try to keep a long view of how the process of social change takes place and how the trajectory of your own life is going to proceed.

We get caught up in the day-to-day so much, and it's interesting now when I'm talking to my daughters, and if somebody said something at school, or there's, "Well, I didn't do quite as well on that test as I wanted." And you want them to take it seriously, but you also want to say to them, you know what, this, too, shall pass; I promise you, 3 months from now, much less 30 years from now, you will not remember.

And so I think that trying to keep your eye on the prize of where it is that you want to go and not be discouraged or overly impressed with yourself on a day-to-day basis, I think, is very important. And then, you have to get some exercise in the morning to—[*laughter*]. I don't run as fast as these folks, but I get a little exercise, which does help in terms of stress relief.

All right. It's a gentleman's turn. Let's see, somebody from this side. This young man right here in the sharp-looking checkered shirt.

Democracy/Human Rights/North Korea/Africa

Q. Good afternoon again, Mr. President. Especially as it relates to human rights and social change—I'm Jomain McKenzie, and I'm a focal point with the Global Fund Board. As it relates to human rights and social change, how do you make the decision to allow societies to go through the natural evolutionary process of having change occur on their own versus having governments exert policies to make these same political social changes?

The President. Yes, that's a really interesting question. It's an interesting question, and it's one that I have to struggle with all the time.

Every society, as I said, is at a different phase in development, in their own history; they have different cultural traditions. And so the way I think about it is, is that the United States has certain core values and principles that we believe deeply in. And we don't necessarily expect that every country will formulate how to secure those ideals and those principles. We don't expect it to be done exactly as we do any more than we expect every—obviously, our democracy is not the same as a Jamaican democracy or a British democracy or Australian democracy. But we believe in democracy. We think that if people have the ability to speak out about their own lives, some sense of agency, then that society will be stronger. And that doesn't mean that we won't work with a country that doesn't precisely abide by those principles, but we will still speak out.

There are times where a country is clearly engaging in activities that are so egregious that it's not culturally specific; it typically has to do with a government wanting to exert control over people and oppress them. And in those instances, I think it is entirely appropriate for us to speak out forcefully and, in some cases, to not do business with them.

I mean, you look at a country like North Korea. I mean, obviously, Korean culture is different than American culture. On the other hand, you look at what's happening in South Korea, and you look at what's happening in North Korea, and those are two entirely different societies. And I can tell you which one you'd rather live in.

And if you have a situation in which people are being murdered simply because they didn't agree with the government on something or didn't want their economic fate to be entirely determined by the whims of some government bureaucrat, and suddenly, they're sent to a labor camp, that's something where we as an international community have to speak out on.

And then, there are some issues that may be culturally specific, but you know what, I think they're wrong. I won't—we're not going to try to force that country to change, but I may try to shame that country. There are nations where slavery still exists. And that may be part of the ancient culture in that society, but slavery is wrong. And I'm not going to give them the excuse that, well, this is who we are.

In Africa—and I can speak, I think, fairly as somebody who is the son of an African father—there are practices like female genital mutilation that may be part of the tradition there, but it's wrong. And I'm going to say so. And it will be U.S. policy to say that it's wrong.

So the tools we use to try to bring about change around the world may vary. And as I said earlier, we're not always perfectly consistent. I—there are times where we've got allies

who are not observing all the human rights we would like, and there are some—times where there are countries that are adversaries of ours, where they do some things quite well. And you can't expect us, or any country, to be perfectly consistent in every circumstance. But what I've tried to do is be fairly consistent in terms of what we believe, what we stand for, and then we use different tools depending on what we think will bring about the most change. In some cases, it will just be a diplomatic statement. In some cases, it may be serious enough that we will organize—try to organize the United Nations or other multilateral forums to speak out against certain practices. In some cases, it may be so egregious that we need to sanction them, and we will try to organize the international community in that way.

And then, finally, in the ultimate circumstance, where the violations of our values are so severe that they start spilling over and—in the instance of, for example, genocide—we may say to ourselves, in concert with the international community, we need to intervene because this government is so brutal and so unacceptable that we need to protect people. But we do that in the context of an international conversation so that we're not simply making these decisions—or we're not so arrogant that we're not paying attention to what the rest of the world community is saying. Okay?

This young lady who I originally had called on and got skipped over. No, no, this one right here. Yes. Right here. I'm sorry, I love you too though. [*Laughter*] I mean, I just——

Overseas Tax Havens/Economic Development

Q. Good afternoon, Mr. President. My name is Katrina King-Smith. I'm from the Turks and Caicos Islands. My question is two part as well. Firstly, in countries such as the Turks and Caicos Islands where the population is small and our main sources of revenue are tourism and foreign direct investment, I was wondering if you can suggest two ways that the government may better generate and regulate sustainable revenue, especially with regulations currently being put in place to close offshore financial centers.

And secondly, I was wondering if after your term has ended, would you mind coming to the Turks and Caicos to vacation? [*Laughter*]

The President. On the second question, absolutely. [*Laughter*] I'll do some island-hopping once I'm out of office. And you guys can show me all the good places to go.

The—on this issue of offshore financial centers, we respect each country to set up its own financial regulations. And we recognize that for small countries, that providing services—including financial services—may be an important source of revenue.

The one thing that we have to make sure of is that these financial centers are not either used for illicit money laundering or tax avoidance by large U.S. corporations that set up cutouts or front organizations, but as a practical matter, are operating in the United States, employing folks in the United States, essentially headquartered in the United States and yet somehow, their mailing address is such-and-such island where they have to pay no taxes.

Those are the kinds of egregious concerns that we're trying to deal with. I think we try to take it on a case-by-case basis. And in my CARICOM meeting that I just had, this issue was brought up. There were a number of leaders who expressed concern that maybe they were being unfairly labeled as areas of high financial risk. And what I committed to them is, we will examine their complaints and go through in very concrete ways where our concerns are and how our governments can work together.

More broadly, I think that the—if you look at some of the most successful countries in the world, they're actually pretty small countries, like Singapore, for example, that on paper look like they have no assets, and yet, if you go to Singapore, it has one of the highest standards of living in the world. What is it that Singapore did that might be replicable?

Well, one of the most important things they did was, they made an enormous investment in their people. And if you've got a highly skilled, highly educated workforce, if you've set up rules of law and governance that are transparent and noncorrupt, then you can attract actually a lot of service industries to supplement

the tourist industry, because people would want to locate in your country. You could envision people wanting to operate and have offices there where you've got a trained workforce. And these days, so many businesses are operating over the Internet and—that if you've got a really skilled workforce that provides value added, you will attract companies, and you'll attract businesses.

What deters people from investing in most countries is conflict, corruption, and a lack of skills or infrastructure. And those countries that are able to address those problems—have rule of law and eliminate corruption; make sure that you are investing in the education of your people, and it's a continuous education, it doesn't just stop at the lower grades, but you give people constant opportunities to upgrade their skills; you have a decent infrastructure—you're going to be able to succeed. That's the recipe, the formula for a 21st-century economy.

All right. Uh-oh, they're starting to holler at me. [*Laughter*] Let's see, I haven't gone back here in a while. This gentleman in the blue shirt right here.

China/U.S. Foreign Aid

Q. Thanks so much, Mr. President. We know that there's been an increasing military assertiveness of China, especially in the South China Sea. And it seems that the U.S. has responded to that by pledging to increase its military presence because it recognizes the danger that that military increase of China poses to its friends and allies there. Now, China's growing power isn't just military, it's economic. On this side of the world, China has used this soft power, this economic power, especially to woo Caribbean governments.

My questions are, how does the U.S. view China's influence in its own backyard, especially since you've just talked about the cold war and alliances? And secondly, what plan does the U.S. have, if any, to contribute more to economic life in the Caribbean to ward off China in terms of foreign direct investment? Thank you very much, Mr. President.

The President. What's your name?

Q. Oh, sorry. My name is Newton Harris from the University of Technology, Jamaica.

The President. Fantastic. The—well, first of all, let me say that it is U.S. official policy and it is my strong belief that we should welcome China's peaceful rise. What China has done in the last 20, 30 years is remarkable. More people have been lifted out of poverty in a shorter period of time than perhaps any time in human history. And that's good for the world. I mean, we should be more fearful of a poorer, collapsing China than a China that is participating in the world marketplace and trading and is getting along with its neighbors and part of the international order, because there are a really large number of Chinese people, and we want them to be doing well.

So our policy is not to fear China's peaceful rise. Where we get concerned with China is where it is not necessarily abiding by international norms and rules and is using its sheer size and muscle to force countries into subordinate positions. And that's the concern we have around maritime issues. We think this can be solved diplomatically, but just because the Philippines or Vietnam are not as large as China doesn't mean that they can just be elbowed aside.

And by the way, we don't have a particular view on the territorial disputes, the maritime disputes. Our attitude is simply, let's use the mechanisms that we have in place internationally to resolve them.

Now, with respect to Chinese investment in the Caribbean or in the Americas, in the Western Hemisphere, my response is the same one that I gave when I was asked this question in Africa, which is, if China is making investments that are building up infrastructure or improving education or helping the people, then we welcome that. We think that's great. The only thing is, you got to make sure you look at what strings may be attached. If the investments are made and it's solely to build a road to a mine to extract raw materials that are going to then be immediately going to a port and shipped to China, and if Chinese workers are shipped in to build the road, and if you don't know exactly what the deal was with the Government that

led to China getting the contract, in those situations, it may not be in fact serving the long-term interests of the country.

Now, I would say—by the way, I'd say the same thing about the United States. So if we come in with an aid package to your country, and we say we've got this great deal, we're going to give you a hundred million dollars for such and such, but if when you evaluate the actual benefits, it's U.S. companies that are disproportionately benefiting from it, and it's creating a situation where over the long term, the United States is making a whole lot of profits, but is not leaving behind a sustainable industrial base or ways in which that country can develop, then you have to evaluate that and try to get a better deal.

So what I'm saying is not unique to China, it's—I think that's how all countries should be operating. Your Government should be transparent; it should be clear about what you're getting. There should be an accounting of how the money flows. There should be a sense that over the long term, Jamaican businesses or somebody from Belize is getting a job, or—right? I mean, there should be some sense of how is this benefiting us over the long term. And that's, I think, the only criteria that we're going to lay out.

Now, last thing I'll say, because you asked—you kind of posed, is there, like, a bidding war going on here for affections? The Chinese are giving us flowers and chocolates and—[*laughter*]—what are you doing for us lately? [*Laughter*] And so what I would say is this. The United States, I think, historically has been an enormous provider of development aid. Not always, by the way, has it followed the rule I just laid out in terms of whether or not the local recipients are benefiting, but I think we've gotten a lot better at that.

And if you look at institutions like the World Bank or other multilateral institutions, we remain the largest contributors by far. So sometimes, when you get money from a multilateral institution, you look at who's doing what. If you look at what happens in terms of when Haiti gets decimated, who's raising the money? We tend to look pretty good. It turns out, we're doing more than our fair share. And we will continue to do that.

We do have some fiscal constraints. And sometimes, I think—when I travel to the Americas, to the region, people ask, why don't we have sort of the kinds of Alliance for Progress programs with huge sums of money? Well, part of it is, is that right after World War II, the United States was so large relative to the rest of the world. Japan was decimated; Europe was decimated. Huge chunks of the world were behind the Iron Curtain. And so it was natural that we gave fivefold or tenfold more than anybody else could do. Well, things have evened out, if—in case you haven't noticed.

We're still, by far, the most powerful nation on Earth, and we still do more than everybody else, but we do expect others to step up and do their fair share. But I can guarantee you this: We will always do our fair share. And nowhere is that truer than in the Caribbean and in the Americas, because you are our neighbors and some of our closest friends. All right?

Let's see. It's a young lady's turn. This young lady right here. Right here.

U.S. Immigration Policy

Q. Welcome, Mr. President. I lived a block away from you in Chicago when I went to the University of Chicago.

The President. Is that right?

Q. And my college sweetheart, Sam Kass, was your private chef until very recently.

The President. Oh, wow! [*Laughter*] Well, you're just putting Sam's business all out there. [*Laughter*] All right. What's your name?

Q. Lisandra Rickards**.** I work for the Branson Centre of Entrepreneurship.

The President. Cassandra?

Q. Lisandra, yes.

The President. Lisandra. All right. Well, I'll tease Sam about this one. [*Laughter*]

Q. Please do. [*Laughter*]

The President. Everybody knows about you now. Go ahead.

Q. My question is around immigration. We've heard a lot about your immigration policy for undocumented immigrants who are currently living in the U.S. But what about hope-

ful families that are seeking a legal pathway for immigration into the U.S., but are finding 7- to 10-year delays before they even can get to apply? I'd love to hear you talk some more about your policy regarding shortening that timeline and making it less onerous on the applicants.

The President. Good. That's a great question. That's a great question. The United States is a nation of immigrants. And this region has contributed to the remarkable progress that the United States has made over the last two centuries. And my goal during the course of my Presidency has been to make sure we continue to be a nation of immigrants as well as a nation of laws and that we're attracting talent from all around the world.

It's part of what makes us special is, you walk in Brooklyn, and there are folks from everywhere. But they're all striving, they're all talented, they're all trying to make their dreams come true. And that is what gives us the energy and the strength to be able to accomplish everything we've accomplished.

So we need to fix what is right now a broken immigration system. Part of it is dealing with those who are undocumented, but who have been living there a long time, are part of the community, providing them with a pathway in which they have to earn a legal status, but recognizing that they're there and we're not going to be separating out families. That's not who we are. That's not true to our values. And ultimately, it's not good for our economy.

But you are absolutely right that part of the reason that some people take the illegal route is because we make the legal route so difficult. And so we're trying to identify ways to streamline that process.

Now, I have to be honest. A lot of people want to come to America. So unless we just had no borders, there's always going to be a wait. There's always going to be background checks. There's always going to be some prioritization in terms of who's admitted and who's not. But I do think that there are practices we have, for example, where someone has a relation in the United States, is clearly qualified to become at some point a legal resident and maybe in the future a citizen, but in order to do it, they then have to first leave the country, wait, and now they're separated from their families. I mean, there have to be ways in which we can make the system clearer and less burdensome.

Some of those changes we wanted to make were in the legislation that was proposed and passed the United States Senate. I think there is still the opportunity to get that done before my Presidency is over, but it does require the Republican Party, I think, to engage with me in a more serious effort and to put aside the politics.

Thank you very much for the question. All right, we've got—this side has been neglected right here. I'm going to go with this guy with the beard, man, because he looks a little bit like—he looks a little bit like Marshawn Lynch. [*Laughter*]

U.S. Criminal Justice Reform Efforts/Marijuana Legalization/Counternarcotics and Drug Interdiction Efforts

Q. [*Inaudible*]—give thanks. Yes. Greetings, Mr. President.

The President. How are you?

Q. More life and blessings on you and your family. You know?

The President. What's your name?

Q. My name is Miguel Williams, but you can call I and I Steppa. [*Laughter*]

The President. Steppa.

Q. Ya, mon, that is quite sufficient. Ya, mon. My question has to do and surrounds U.S. policy as it regards the legalization, the decriminalization of marijuana.

The President. How did I anticipate this question? [*Laughter*]

Q. Ya, mon. Ya, mon.

The President. How did I guess this question? [*Laughter*]

Q. Yes. And, Mr. President, it really comes on the foreground of—we face economic challenges with the IMF, et cetera. But—and we find realistically that the hemp industry, the marijuana industry provides a highly feasible alternative to rise up out of poverty. So I am wanting to overstand and to understand how U.S. is envisioning and how would you see Jamaica pushing forward on a decriminalization,

legalization emphasis on the hemp industry. Give thanks.

The President. Okay. Well—[*laughter*]—let me—I do want to separate out what are serious issues in the United States and then how that relates to our foreign policy and our interactions with the region. There is the issue of legalization of marijuana, and then there is the issue of decriminalizing or dealing with the incarceration and, in some cases, devastation of communities as a consequence of nonviolent drug offenses.

I am a very strong believer that the path that we have taken in the United States in the so-called War on Drugs has been so heavy in emphasizing incarceration that it has been counterproductive. You have young people who did not engage in violence who get very long penalties, get placed in prison, and then are rendered economically unemployable, are almost pushed into, then, the underground economy, learn crime more effectively in prison, families are devastated.

So it's been very unproductive. And what we're trying to do is to reform our criminal justice system. And the good news is, there has actually been some interest on the part of unlikely allies like the evangelical community or some otherwise very conservative Republicans, because it's very expensive to incarcerate people, and a recognition that this may not be the best approach. So that's one issue.

There's then the second issue of legalizing marijuana, whether it's medical marijuana or recreational use. There are two States in the United States that have embarked on an experiment to decriminalize or legalize marijuana: Colorado and Washington State. And we will see how that experiment works its way through the process.

Right now that is not Federal policy, and I do not foresee, anytime soon, Congress changing the law at a national basis. But I do think that if there are States that show that they are not suddenly a magnet for additional crime, that they have a strong enough public health infrastructure to push against the potential of increased addiction, then it's conceivable that that will spur on a national debate. But that is going to be some time off.

And then, the third issue is, what will U.S. international policy be? And we had some discussion with the CARICOM countries about this. I know on paper a lot of folks think, you know what, if we just legalize marijuana, then it will reduce the money flowing into the transnational drug trade, there are more revenues and jobs created.

I have to tell you that it's not a silver bullet, because, first of all, if you are legalizing marijuana, then how do you deal with other drugs, and where do you draw the line? Second of all, as is true in the global economy generally, if you have a bunch of small, medium-sized marijuana businesses scattered across the Caribbean and this is suddenly legal, if you think that big multinational companies are not going to suddenly come in and market and try to control and profit from the trade—that's, I think, a very real scenario.

And so I think we have to have a conversation about this, but our current policy continues to be that in the United States, we need to decrease demand. We need to focus on the public health approach to decreasing demand. We have to stop the flow of guns and cash into the Caribbean and Central America and Latin America. And at the same time, I think the Caribbean, Latin America have to—Central America—have to cooperate with us to try to shrink the power of the transnational drug organizations that are vicious and hugely destructive.

And if we combine a public health perspective, a focus on not simply throwing every low-level person with possession into prison, but trying to get them treatment, if we combine that with economic development and alternative opportunities for youth, then I think we can strike the right balance. It may not comport with your—completely with your vision for the future, but I think that we could certainly have a smarter approach to it than we currently do.

Got time for one more question? One more question. Let's see—this is always hard. It's always hard to be that last—it's a lady's turn, so

all the guys just have to put down their hands. It's too late for you. Let's see. You know what, I'm just going to go with this young lady right here. She's just right in front. Go ahead, yes, you. Hold on a second, wait for the mike. [*Laughter*]

Q. Afternoon, Mr. President. I'm Alana Williams. I'm from the South Side of Chicago.

The President. Wait, you're from Chicago?

Q. Yes!

The President. Well, what are you doing here? This is supposed to be for Caribbean young ladies.

Q. Actually, I attend Olivet Nazarene University, and I'm studying abroad, so I'm here. It's Jamaica.

The President. I see, okay. Well, you're cheating a little bit. I'll have to call on somebody else after you. [*Laughter*] But I'm going to go ahead and let you ask a question real quick. Because I'll see you in Chicago. [*Laughter*]

Crime Prevention/Gun Control

Q. Most definitely. My question is really more so about home. I love my city, but the violence is terrible, specifically amongst young Black men. And I know we're talking a lot about police brutality, but I've lost a lot of friends from people who look just like me. And that's the problem. And so I would like to know what you believe is the true source of the violence. And what is one solution to an extreme problem? Thank you.

The President. Well, look, I know you asked it about Chicago, but I know there are neighborhoods right here in Jamaica that have the same problems and in every place all across the Caribbean, certainly in Central America.

I don't think there is just one single factor. Obviously, a contributor is one that we just talked about, which is the drug trade. If you have an illicit trade that generates huge amounts of money and is not regulated above board, that is going to attract ultimately people trying to carve out turf, trying to control markets, and violence ensues. So that's point number one.

Point number two is the easy accessibility of weapons. And we were talking earlier about different traditions; the United States has a tradition of gun ownership that is deep, I mean, dates back to the pioneer past. And I think it is a mistake that we do not do a better job of putting in place commonsense gun safety regulations that would keep guns out of the hands of criminals, but unfortunately, a majority of Congress does not agree with me. Even after 6-year-olds were gunned down viciously in their classroom, we could not get action done. But what we are doing is cooperating with the region as we are cooperating with local jurisdictions to try to stem at least the flow of guns using the administrative tools that I have. So that's number two.

Number three is providing alternative paths for young people. If a young person is reading by the age—by the third grade at grade level, if they are enjoying school, if they see a path for success, then they are less likely to get involved in criminal activity, and that will reduce gun violence, and that will reduce crime, and that will reduce death. Which means investing in things like early childhood education and improving our schools, those things are absolutely vital.

But there is a fourth element to this, and that is our own responsibility. And particularly, as I speak to young people here today, we always talk about what can we do about the violence as if it's like just separate and apart. But we have control in our communities of our immediate friends, our immediate family, our—we influence our peers. And I do think that the power that all of you have as young leaders to be able to not make excuses for violence, because there are a whole bunch of folks who have really tough backgrounds and come from terrible circumstances and are really poor, but they don't go around shooting somebody. They don't beat somebody over the head because of sneakers or because they looked at them the wrong way.

And so there is an element of us retaking our communities and being willing to speak out against violence in our midst that doesn't ignore all the social factors. But Dr. King used to say it's not an either-or situation, it's a both-and situation.

Government has to act. We have to have effective policing, which means policing that is actually protecting as opposed to some of the things that we've been seeing of late in the United States and, I'm sure, is true in other countries. And I say that saying that police have an extraordinarily difficult job, and the overwhelming majority do a great job under severe circumstances. But there's got to be trust built between the communities, and I had to put a Task Force together that put together some excellent reports in the wake of Ferguson around how we can do that.

But ultimately, what happens in the home, what happens in the school—some of you are parents already; some of you will be parents—what we teach our children in terms of values, valuing themselves, valuing others, that's important too.

So there's no single solution. But all of us have to do better. Because we—the tragedy of what we see in the United States, but also in cities and towns all across the Caribbean and Central America, is terrible. And there's no excuse for it.

All right. Because I called accidentally on a Chicagoan—[*laughter*]—I've got to call on one more person. Look, this young lady stood up, so she showed—that wasn't fair, but I called on her, go ahead. Are—you're not from Chicago are you?

Q. No.

The President. You promise? Okay. All right, get the mike—oh, I'm sorry. You know what, I confess, even though I was going to call on you, she thought she was going to be called on. I'm going to call on both of you now, but each of you get a really short question.

Q. Okay.

The President. Really short, quick.

Entrepreneurship

Q. Well, I'm the team leader for the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, and I want to thank you for the initiatives that you're planning to do here. And I wanted to invite you to our annual general meeting that's going to be held in Babson in the States, so we want you to come because you are part of a global team. So I'm representing Jamaica as the youngest female team leader, and I'm inviting you to come so we can talk about Startup America and we can collaborate on different projects. So I'm inviting you to come to that event.

The President. Okay, that was good. And I can say I'll await your invitation. And what I will say very quickly is, entrepreneurship, small and medium-sized businesses, that is a priority, and that means that we've got to create channels for access to capital, technical training. These are areas where a lot of our development aid is shifting.

Instead of just giving somebody a fish, we want to teach them how to fish. And what you're seeing—what you see among young people all around the world is, is that instead of just finding a job in a big organization, they may want to create something of their own and a new vision. And that kind of creativity has to be tapped. So we're shifting a lot of the work that we do around issues of entrepreneurship, so I'll be interested in seeing what you have to say.

All right. This young lady right here, go ahead.

International Monetary Fund/Economic Development

Q. Hello, everyone. Hi, Mr. President. My name is Davianne Tucker, and I'm the Guild president-elect for the University of the West Indies. Thank you. So my question is, the Jamaican Government has been holding firmly to the stipulations of the IMF agreement. There are many who would like to know if the debt writeoffs for Jamaica are being considered as a means of improving the livelihood of our people. So is that being considered?

The President. Well, this came up in my bilateral with your Prime Minister. And look, historically, I think there has been times where the IMF or the international multilateral organizations worked with governments in ways that weren't always productive, got them deep into debt, and then suddenly, you've got a lot more flowing out than was going in. And in some cases, there were governments around the world that were corrupt, lent money, the

money goes into a Swiss bank account, suddenly, the people are paying off for decades.

In Jamaica, some of it just had to do with tough circumstances, not always the best fiscal management. I think that the current Government has been wise to work hard to abide by the IMF provisions. That's not been easy. And I think that has been the right thing to do.

But what I also agreed with when I spoke to the Prime Minister is the need to try to address in a more systematic fashion how we can spur growth and not just put the squeeze on folks. Because what it turns out is, is that if a—the best way for a country to reduce its debt is to grow really fast and to generate more income.

Now, that does require development plans and approaches that are productive. And it is true that sometimes that requires some short-term sacrifice. And I think the question that the people of Jamaica, just like the people of the United States and everywhere else, should be asking is: If the Government is spending money right now, is it on something that is going to help create long-term growth and help people succeed? If the answer is no, you shouldn't spend that money.

Spending money just for the sake of money—spending money is not—that's not the formula for success. But if the money is being spent on what we talked about—early childhood education, if it's being spent on infrastructure, if it's being spent on research, if it's being spent on building skills for workers—those are good investments. And I do think that the international financial institutions have to accommodate the interests of countries who have a sound plan for growth so that they can not just stay in this static state, but can, over time, thrive and succeed. And the way that's going to happen is because of outstanding young leaders like you.

I've had a great conversation. Thank you, Jamaica. Thank you. Appreciate it, young leaders. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:55 p.m. at the University of the West Indies, Mona–Western Jamaica Campus. In his remarks, he referred to Aubrey Stewart, student, University of the West Indies, Mona–Western Jamaica Campus; Usain S. Bolt and Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce, sprinters, 2012 Jamaican Olympic team; Angeline Jackson, executive director, Quality of Citizenship Jamaica; President Raúl Castro Ruz of Cuba; Sam Kass, former White House "Let's Move!" Executive Director and Senior Policy Adviser for Nutrition Policy; and Marshawn Lynch, running back, National Football League's Seattle Seahawks.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Juan Carlos Varela of Panama in Panama City, Panama
April 10, 2015

President Varela. We are very happy to have President Obama in our country. We congratulate him on all the effort he's doing to unite our continent. I think it's a historic meeting. It's going to be a very successful Summit of the Americas.

I think President Obama is going to leave a legacy the way he is supporting Hispanics in the United States, and also his new policy for Cuba for us is very important. And I thank him also for the cooperation that the U.S. Government has given us in these past 7 years of the administration in different regions like security, education, health. And we look forward to work with him as a regional partner—not just a bilateral relationship, but as a regional partner to make America a strong place and continued peace.

President Obama. Well, I just want to thank President Varela and the entire team and the people of Panama, for the incredible hospitality. I had a chance earlier to visit the Panama Canal for the first time and saw the extraordinary progress that's being made in the new development that will be completed next year. It's really a symbol of human ingenuity, but

also Panama's central role in bridging the two continents and bringing the hemisphere together.

And I congratulated the President not only on what I'm certain will be a successful summit——

President Varela. Yes.

President Obama. ——but also the extraordinary progress that Panama has made economically, the transparency and accountability that his Government has shown. We—Panama is a proud democracy, and its ability to engage in elections and peaceful transfers of power, I think, is a symbol of the progress that's been made throughout the hemisphere over the last several decades.

And as President Varela noted, we are great partners on a whole range of issues—security, the economy, education—and we had an excellent discussion about how we can further deepen those ties.

So we are very appreciative of the great friends that we have in the Panamanian people.

President Varela. Thank you, sir.

President Obama. We want to thank you for hosting us. I know these summits are a lot of work. I want to thank the team. I want to thank the people of Panama, especially because I'm sure they're having to put up with some traffic—[*laughter*]—while all these leaders are here. And we look forward to excellent discussions during the course of the next 2 days.

President Varela. Thank you, Mr. President. It's an honor.

President Obama. Thank you. All right. Thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 11:25 a.m. at the Hotel Riu Plaza Panama.

Remarks During a Meeting With Central American Integration System Leaders in Panama City
April 10, 2015

Well, thank you, President Molina. Let me, first of all, thank our friend, the President of Panama and the people of Panama, Vice President of Panama, for the incredible hospitality and the outstanding arrangements for this summit.

It is good to see all of you again. The last time we met was in Costa Rica, and we, I thought, had a very productive discussion. And rather than just talk, I think our goal was to make sure that we had concrete actions that we could take that would improve our economies, the opportunities for our people, security in the region.

And this is very important to the United States, not just because of proximity, not just because our neighbors who are represented here are very close by, but because we have incredible bonds as people. There are Americans who make enormous contributions to our society every single day who come from Nicaragua and El Salvador and Belize and all the countries that are represented here today.

And so we have ties of family. We have ties of commerce. We share incredible heritage and incredible history. And so it is very important for us to make sure that the United States stands in solidarity and has a partnership with each of the countries that are represented around this table.

I will not be long. As President Molina indicated, since the last time we've met, it has been the determination of my administration that we find ways that we can more concretely assist many of the countries in Central America so that people in those countries feel that they have opportunity and development. That is in our interests, and that is in your interests as well.

We know, for example, that criminal elements and narcotrafficking thrives where people feel that they have no other pathways to success. If we can make sure that they feel that their efforts are rewarded in their own countries, then we're going to be much more suc-

cessful with the security arrangements and coordination that we are involved with.

We know that the issue of migration does not just affect the United States, it also affects the countries in the region themselves. And the more that people, where they live, feel that they can find opportunity and raise families and be successful, the less disruptions there are and the less tensions there are at our borders.

As a consequence, in my budget, I've requested $1 billion to support U.S. engagement across Central America. Some of these dollars would be designed to strengthen regional cooperation on security, but some of it, as President Varela and I spoke about during our earlier bilateral, is really focused on human development: education, providing young people pathways to success, focusing on what's happening at the community level. And we are very excited to work with you to find what you think will be most effective in your countries, and then to have a coordinated process moving forward in order for us to succeed.

We do believe that regional integration on issues like energy, electricity, improving trade flows all can be incredibly valuable for the region as a whole and ultimately will be valuable for the United States as well.

We continue to believe that part of that regional agenda should focus on governance issues and transparency. And we're in a city right now and a country that I think has done an excellent job on many of those fronts and, as a consequence, the high growth rates in Panama, I think, should serve as a useful model for so many countries not just in this region, but around the world that business will be attracted where there are skilled workers and where there's rules that people understand and can follow and there's accountability and transparency.

So the bottom line is, I think we have a strong, common agenda. This is something that we do because what's good for this region will ultimately good—be good for the United States, as well.

Before I came in, I signed—me and President Varela witnessed the signing of a deal between Boeing and Copa Airlines. It is going to create 12,000 jobs in the United States and 6,000 in Panama. And that's an example of what happens when we work together. So we want to seize this opportunity.

I'm very grateful for the opportunities to dialogue with you. I want to spend most of my time listening and not just talking. And we are very, very grateful to all of you for the cooperation and partnership that we already have. We think we can make it even stronger and even better.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:17 p.m. at the Hotel Riu Plaza Panama. In his remarks, he referred to President Otto Fernando Pérez Molina of Guatemala; and President Juan Carlos Varela and Vice President Isabel de Saint Malo de Alvarado of Panama.

Remarks at the CEO Summit of the Americas in Panama City
April 10, 2015

Well, thank you, Luis. First of all, let me not only thank you but thank our host and the people of Panama, who have done an extraordinary job organizing this summit.

It is a great pleasure to be joined by leaders who I think have done extraordinary work in their own countries. And I've had the opportunity to work with President Rousseff and Peña Nieto on a whole host of regional, international, and bilateral issues and very much appreciate their leadership. And clearly, President Varela is doing an outstanding job here in Panama as well.

A lot of important points have already been made. Let me just say this. When I came into office, in 2009, obviously, we were all facing an enormous economic challenge globally. Since that time, both exports from the United States to Latin America and imports from Latin America to the United States have gone up

over 50 percent. And it's an indication not only of the recovery that was initiated—in part by important policies that were taken and steps that were taken in each of the countries in coordination through mechanisms like the G–20—but also the continuing integration that's going to be taking place in this hemisphere as part of a global process of integration.

And I'll just point out some trends that I think are inevitable. One has already been mentioned: that global commerce, because of technology, because of logistics, it is erasing the boundaries by which we think about businesses not just for large companies, but also for small and medium-sized companies as well. That's point number one.

Point number two is that technology is going to continue to be disruptive. I'm glad that my friend, Mark Zuckerberg, is here. Obviously, what he's done with Facebook has been transformative. But what's important to recognize is, is that it's not just companies like Apple and Google and Facebook that are being transformed by technology. Traditional industries are being changed as well. Small businesses are being changed as well. How we buy, sell, market—all that's shifting. And that's not going to go away.

And what that means is, is that going forward, for the hemisphere to continue to experience the growth that's necessary, I think there are a couple of principles that we just have to follow. And some of them have already been mentioned, so I'll just speak to them very quickly.

The first is, our people have to be the best trained in the world. We have to not only educate our children, but we have to give our people the capacity to continue to learn throughout their lives, because the economy is changing and workers have to adapt. It's going to be very rare where somebody works at one place for 30 years with just one skill. So the investments that all of us have to make in education, not just through primary or secondary schools, but if young people are not going to universities, they can still at least get technical training and advanced degrees.

And this is where technology can be our friend. We initiated something called 100,000 Strong to improve the exchanges between students in Latin America and the United States. And part of what we're doing is starting to figure out how can we use technology to reach more young people, not just the folks who are at the top of the economic pyramid, but reach down and access remote areas where suddenly, a young person in a small village, if they are linked through the Internet, have access to the entire world. And companies, I think, can play an important role because public-private partnerships will make these kinds of investments more effective.

Point number two: the issue of infrastructure has already been mentioned. We have a lot of infrastructure we need to build in the United States, and obviously, there's a lot of infrastructure that needs to be built throughout the region. The more we can coordinate and work together on infrastructure, the better off we're going to be.

Just one example: I came from SICA, the meeting of Central American leaders. Their energy costs are typically three times higher than what we pay in the United States. It's a huge impediment to their development. To the extent that we can create a single regional energy market, then the costs of, of transmission, distribution of energy becomes cheaper for all the countries involved, and you get certain economies of scale. And so part of what a Summit of the Americas can accomplish is to try to work on a regional basis around some key infrastructure projects that will help us all grow.

Number three, as has already been mentioned, the issue of broad-based economic development. I was very interested in speaking with President Varela about Panama. They're seeing outstanding growth, and yet there are still some remote areas where I know the President has a priority. How do I reach those communities that are isolated, that are not part of that growth process? All of us have to deal with that.

And that includes in the United States, by the way. Because one of the challenges that we're all facing, when you look at global

growth patterns, is that even when economies are growing, the gaps between rich and poor oftentimes are accelerating, and not only is that not good for social stability, not only is that not good for opportunity, it's not good for business. Because the truth of the matter is, is that when you have a growing middle class and an aspirational poor that are able to access their way into the middle class, then those become the consumers that drive the marketplace much more so than folks at the very top.

There's only so much food you can eat. There's only so many cars you can buy. And at a certain point, if only folks at the top are doing well, and we're not focused on broad-based growth, then growth starts to stall. And so taking the steps to train, to educate, to give access to opportunity, to make sure that infrastructure is reaching everyplace and not just some places—that becomes a very high priority.

And the last point I'll make is the issue of governance. It—President Varela mentioned the issue of violence, and this is obviously something that is of deep concern in many parts of the world and, sadly, is still a problem in portions of the hemisphere. And a lot of it has to do with lack of opportunity. But part of it also has to do with the difficulties of establishing strong security if we also are not combining that with transparency, with government accountability, with a criminal justice system and a judicial system that is perceived as fair and legitimate.

And so the work that we've begun to do together—for example, Brazil and the United States and Mexico, we're working on an Open Government Partnership that makes sure that records are available and people understand how their government is spending their money, how contracts are let, reinforcing norms around rule of law. Not only does that give us more tools to combat violence, but it also, I suspect, makes investors a lot more interested in investing in a country, if they know what the rules are and they have certainty and political risk is reduced.

And again, this is an area where we have to work regionally as opposed to separately. Because the narcotraffickers don't distinguish between borders. Well, that means we can't either. And fortunately, we have some outstanding partners who've been working together. Panama is one of our best partners. President Peña Nieto has been doing outstanding work with us and seeing how we can coordinate more effectively. But issues of personal security, reducing corruption, governance—those are economic agendas. Those are not simply security agendas.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:05 p.m. in the ballroom of the Hotel Riu Plaza Panama. In his remarks, he referred to Luis Alberto Moreno, President, Inter-American Developmental Bank; President Dilma Rousseff of Brazil; and President Enrique Peña Nieto of Mexico. He also referred to the Central American Integration System (SICA).

Remarks During a Question-and-Answer Session at the CEO Summit of the Americas in Panama City
April 10, 2015

First of all, I want to thank the business leaders who are all here represented, and you had some great spokespersons in the front row.

I'll just comment on a couple of themes that ran through a number of the questions. One of the advantages that we may have today that we didn't have, let's say, 15 or 20 or 30 years ago is, I think it used to be viewed as either you have a government status economic model or you have a complete free market, and everything was very ideological sometimes in this region in discussing how economic development went forward.

And I think, by virtue of wisdom and some things that didn't work and some things that did, everybody around the region, throughout the hemisphere, I think has a very practical solution—or a practical orientation. Maybe not

everybody, but almost everybody. [*Laughter*] The—certainly, all the people on this stage. And so the question then becomes, what's the appropriate role for government, what's the appropriate role for the private sector, and how do we fill gaps to get results?

So I believe that the free market is the greatest wealth generator and innovator and is a recipe for success for countries. And I think it's very important for us to initiate reforms that can free up the entrepreneurship and the talents of our people. But I also think that there are going to be market failures. There are times where the market isn't meeting a social need that is necessary in order for businesses to thrive and societies to thrive. And so on—when Stanley talked about public-private partnerships, one way to think about it is where is it that both businesses and government can work together to address a gap or a market failure.

One area is in education. I think that we have to make a public investment through good schools, paying our teachers, training them properly, building infrastructure for schools. But one of the things that we've learned in the United States, for example, is that we have an outstanding community college system, not just the fancy universities at the top, but we also have community colleges throughout every State. But for too long, we weren't talking to businesses—and these community colleges weren't talking to businesses—to ask, what should we be training people for and how should we train them? And by soliciting input from business, suddenly, the training programs in these community colleges became much more effective and were much more likely to lead to jobs in the future. That's the kind of collaboration that's, I think, very important.

The same is true with respect to connectivity that Mark raised. Look, the Internet wouldn't have been created without government investment. It didn't just kind of spring to life on its own. But now that in every country we recognize there's an infrastructure that has to be built, we also have to be working together with the private sector to make sure that it's built in a way that anticipates how rapidly things are changing, because there may be circumstances here where people can entirely leapfrog old technologies and go straight to new technologies.

And so one of the questions, I think, all of us—as leaders and regionally—should be asking is, to what extent are we making joint investments that aren't protecting the old models, but rather are opening up new models that may be more efficient and reach more people.

Third point is, regulatory issues came up a number of times. Look, technology and globalization are disruptive. And usually, somebody is doing well with the status quo, and they don't want change, and so sometimes, breaking down regulations is painful politically. And that's why I'm very admiring of the work that Enrique did with respect to the energy sector in Mexico. That's a very sensitive thing and a very difficult thing. But what he recognized—and ultimately, what all of Mexico recognized—is that that sector will not be as efficient if it does not get the kind of private input and investment and innovation that's required.

So part of, I guess, our strategy has to be to recognize that there are going to be some regulatory barriers and we have to work in concert to try to break some of those down and harmonize regulations across countries and across, in some cases, industries. But in some cases, we may need new regulations to adapt to new times.

And I'll use just the example of climate change to make this point. I visited the Panama Canal today, an amazing feat of human ingenuity. And the expansion that's going to be taking place here in Panama is going to be good for Panama, it's going to be good for world trade, it's going to be good for the region. But it turns out that the Panama Canal really depends on rain in Panama. If water is not coming down at a certain level, if seasonal rain patterns change radically, that can have an enormous impact on economic development not just for Panama, but for the United States and for the entire region.

So there's a circumstance where even as we end old regulations that no longer make sense

or are inhibiting innovation and growth and investment, in some cases, we may need new regulatory approaches to, for example, limit and reduce carbon. And we should do it in an efficient way so that we're harnessing the ingenuity of the private sector; we set a bar, we set a price, and we say, you tell us how you are you going to reduce carbon, but we need to reduce carbon to make sure that the rains still come so that the canal still works.

And that approach to regulation, it's not so much you're for regulation or against regulation, but you're thinking what regulations work today in a practical way to meet our goals, and how do we do it in a way that is the least bureaucratic and the least disruptive, but recognizing that there are still goals that have to be met.

And the last point I would make is, in terms of specific actions—this was raised earlier—the United States is very committed to working with all the countries that are participating in this summit. We are consulting intensively on a bilateral basis, but we're also very interested in working on a regional level. I mentioned Central America. I've put forward a budget of $1 billion in investment in Central America to deal specifically with some of the issues of human investment in capital and youth so that rather than young people feeling a sense of desperation and the only recourse they have is to join gangs or leave their country, that they can start an Internet company using social media and start marketing goods that are produced in their own countries in places all around the world.

There is so much talent, and there's so much ingenuity, but it does require some joint investment and recognizing that we have to think beyond our borders in order to do the right thing for our people. It is good for the United States for some young person in Honduras to have access to the Internet, have access to education, and have access to opportunity. It's good for the United States if Brazil is growing at a rapid pace. It's good for the United States if Panama continues to thrive or Mexico is continuing to succeed.

And the more we see our economies as mutually dependent rather than a zero-sum game, I think the more successful all of us will be. And so we'll take the list of all the business leaders, and we'll work through those lists. I guarantee you that the United States will be more than open to making as much as progress as we can before the next Summit of the Americas. And I'm confident that at least the four—the three leaders on this stage, they'll be with me—and Luis also. [*Laughter*]. All right.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 3:35 p.m. in the ballroom of the Hotel Riu Plaza Panama. Participating in the summit were President Enrique Peña Nieto of Mexico; President Dilma Rousseff of Brazil; and President Juan Carlos Varela of Panama. The moderator was Luis Alberto Moreno, President, Inter-American Development Bank. Questions were asked by Stanley Motta, chairman, Copa Holdings, S.A.; Marco Stefanini, chief executive officer, Stefanini IT Solutions; Francisco A. Aristeguieta, chief executive officer, Citigroup Latin America; Blanca Treviño, chief executive officer, Softtek; and Mark E. Zuckerberg, founder and chief executive officer, Facebook, Inc.

Remarks at a Civil Society Forum in Panama City
April 10, 2015

*Buenas tarde*s. Thank you, President Varela, and thank you very much, Panama, for hosting this Summit of the Americas and, most importantly, for hosting this civil society forum. And I thank everybody who's traveled here from across the region for the courageous work that you do to defend freedom and human rights and to promote equality and opportunity and justice across our hemisphere and around the world.

I am proud to be with you at this first-ever official gathering of civil society leaders at the

Summit of the Americas. And I'm pleased to have Cuba represented with us at this summit for the very first time.

Now, we're here for a very simple reason. We believe that strong, successful countries require strong and vibrant civil societies. We know that throughout our history, human progress has been propelled not just by famous leaders, not just by states, but by ordinary men and women who believe that change is possible; by citizens who are willing to stand up against incredible odds and great danger, not only to protect their own rights, but to extend rights to others.

I had a chance to reflect on this last month when I was in the small town of Selma, Alabama. Some of you may have heard of it. It's a place where, 50 years ago, African Americans marched in peaceful, nonviolent protest, not to ask for special treatment but to be treated equally, in accordance with the founding documents of our Declaration of Independence, our Bill of Rights. They were part of a civil rights movement that had endured violence and repression for decades and would endure it again that day, as many of the marchers were beaten.

But they kept marching. And despite the beatings of that day, they came back, and more returned. And the conscience of a nation was stirred. Their efforts bent, in the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, the arc of the moral universe towards justice. And it was their vision for a more fair and just and inclusive and generous society that ultimately triumphed. And the only reason I stand here today as the President of the United States is because those ordinary people—maids and janitors and schoolteachers—were willing to endure hardship on my behalf.

And that's why I believe so strongly in the work that you do. It's the dreamers—no matter how humble or poor or seemingly powerless—that are able to change the course of human events. We saw it in South Africa, where citizens stood up to the scourge of apartheid. We saw it in Europe, where Poles marched in Solidarity to help bring down the Iron Curtain; in Argentina, where mothers of the disappeared spoke out against the Dirty War. It's the story of my country, where citizens worked to abolish slavery and establish women's rights and workers' rights and rights for gays and lesbians.

It's not to say that my country is perfect; we are not. And that's the point. We always have to have citizens who are willing to question and push our government and identify injustice. We have to wrestle with our own challenges: from issues of race to policing to inequality. But what makes me most proud about the extraordinary example of the United States is not that we're perfect, but that we struggle with it and we have this open space in which society can continually try to make us a more perfect Union.

We've stood up, at great cost, for freedom and human dignity, not just in our own country, but elsewhere. I'm proud of that. And we embrace our ability to become better through our democracy. And that requires more than just the work of government. It demands the hard and frustrating, sometimes, but absolutely vital work of ordinary citizens coming together to make common cause.

So civil society is the conscience of our countries. It's the catalyst of change. It's why strong nations don't fear active citizens. Strong nations embrace and support and empower active citizens. And by the way, it's not as if active citizens are always right; they're not. Sometimes, people start yelling at me or arguing at me, and I think, you don't know what you're talking about. [*Laughter*] But sometimes, they do. And the question is not whether they're always right; the question is, do you have a society in which that conversation, that debate, can be tested and ideas are tested in the marketplace?

And because of the efforts of civil society, now, by and large, there's a consensus in the Americas on democracy and human rights and social development and social inclusiveness. Now, I recognize there's strong differences about the role of civil society, but I believe we can all benefit from open and tolerant and inclusive dialogue. And we should reject violence or intimidation that's aimed at silencing people's voices.

The freedom to be heard is a principle that the Americas at large is committed to. And that doesn't mean, as I said, that we're going to agree on every issue. But we should address those issue candidly and honestly and civilly and welcome the voices of all of our people into the debates that shape the future of the hemisphere.

Now, just to take one example: As the United States begins a new chapter in our relationship with Cuba, we hope it will create an environment that improves the lives of the Cuban people, not because it's imposed by us, the United States, but through the talent and ingenuity and aspirations and the conversation among Cubans from all walks of life so they can decide what the best course is for their prosperity.

As we move toward the process of normalization, we'll have our differences, government to government, with Cuba on many issues, just as we differ at times with other nations within the Americas, just as we differ with our closest allies. There's nothing wrong with that. But I'm here to say that when we do speak out, we're going to do so because the United States of America does believe, and will always stand for, a certain set of universal values. And when we do partner with civil society, it's because we believe our relationship should be with governments and with the peoples that they represent.

It's also because we believe that your work is more important than ever. Here in the Americas, inequality still locks too many people out of our economies. Discrimination still locks too many out of our societies. Around the world, there are still too many places where laws are passed to stifle civil society, where governments cut off funding for groups that they don't agree with; where entrepreneurs are crushed under corruption; where activists and journalists are locked up on trumped-up charges because they dare to be critical of their governments; where the way you look or how you pray or who you love can get you imprisoned or killed.

And whether it's crackdowns on free expression in Russia or China or restrictions on freedom of association and assembly in Egypt or prison camps run by the North Korean regime, human rights and fundamental freedoms are still at risk around the world. And when that happens, we believe we have a moral obligation to speak out.

We also know that our support for civil society is not just about what we're against, but also what we're for. Because we've noticed that governments that are more responsive and effective are typically governments where the people are free to assemble and speak their minds and petition their leaders and hold us accountable.

We know that our economies attract more trade and investment when citizens are free to start a new business without paying a bribe. We know that societies are more likely to succeed when all our people—regardless of color or class or creed or sexual orientation or gender—are free to live and pray and love as they choose. That's what we believe.

And increasingly, civil society is a source of ideas about everything from promoting transparency and free expression to reversing inequality and rescuing our environment. And that's why, as part of our "Stand With Civil Society" initiative, we've joined with people around the world to push back on those who deny your right to be heard. I've made it a mission of our government not only to protect civil society groups, but to partner with you and empower you with the knowledge and the technology and the resources to put your ideas into action. And the U.S. supports the efforts to establish a permanent, meaningful role for civil societies in future Summits of the Americas.

So let me just say, when the United States sees space closing for civil society, we will work to open it. When efforts are made to wall you off from the world, we'll try to connect you with each other. When you are silenced, we'll try to speak out alongside you. And when you're suppressed, we want to help strengthen you. As you work for change, the United States will stand up alongside you every step of the way. We are respectful of the differences among our countries. The days in which our

agenda in this hemisphere so often presumed that the United States could meddle with impunity, those days are past.

But what it does mean—but we do have to be very clear that when we speak out on behalf of somebody who's been imprisoned for no other reason than because they spoke truth to power, when we are helping an organization that is trying to empower a minority group inside a country to get more access to resources, we're not doing that because it serves our own interests, we're doing it because we think it's the right thing to do. And that's important.

And I hope that all the other countries at the Summit of the Americas will join us in seeing that it's important. Because sometimes, as difficult as it is, it's important for us to be able to speak honestly and candidly about—on behalf of people who are vulnerable and people who are powerless, people who are voiceless. I know, because there was a time in our own country where there were groups that were voiceless and powerless. And because of world opinion, that helped to change those circumstances. We have a debt to pay, because the voices of ordinary people have made us better. That's a debt that I want to make sure we repay in this hemisphere and around the world.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:35 p.m. at the Hotel El Panama Convention Center and Casino.

Remarks at the First Plenary Session of the Summit of the Americas in Panama City, Panama
April 11, 2015

Let me begin by thanking President Varela and the Panamanian Government for their leadership in hosting this seventh Summit of the Americas. Mr. President, to you and the people of Panama City and all the people of Panama, thank you for your extraordinary hospitality and your outstanding arrangements.

I too want to express my thoughts and prayers are with the people of Chile as they're managing through a very difficult time. And I look forward to seeing President Bachelet at a future summit.

When I came to my first Summit of the Americas 6 years ago, I promised to begin a new chapter of engagement in this region. I believed that our nations had to break free from the old arguments and the old grievances that had too often trapped us in the past, that we had a shared responsibility to look to the future and to think and act in fresh ways. I pledged to build a new era of cooperation between our countries, as equal partners, based on mutual interests and mutual respect. And I said that this new approach would be sustained throughout my Presidency; it has, including during this past year. I've met that commitment.

We come together at a historic time. As has already been noted, the changes that I announced to U.S. policy toward Cuba mark the beginning of a new relationship between the people of the United States and the people of Cuba. It will mean, as we're already seeing, more Americans traveling to Cuba, more cultural exchanges, more commerce, more potential investment. And most of all, it will mean more opportunity and resources for the Cuban people. We hope to be able to help on humanitarian projects, to provide more access to telecommunications and the Internet and the free flow of information.

We continue to make progress towards fulfilling our shared commitments to formally reestablish diplomatic relations, and I have called on Congress to begin working to lift the embargo that's been in place for decades. The point is, the United States will not be imprisoned by the past. We're looking to the future and to policies that improve the lives of the Cuban people and advance the interests of cooperation in the hemisphere.

Now, this shift in U.S. policy represents a turning point for our entire region. The fact that President Castro and I are both sitting here today marks a historic occasion. This is the first time in more than half a century that all the nations of the Americas are meeting to address our future together. I think it's no secret—President Castro, I'm sure, would agree—that there will continue to be significant differences between our two countries. We will continue to speak out on behalf of universal values that we think are important. I'm sure President Castro will continue to speak out on the issues he thinks are important.

But I firmly believe that if we can continue to move forward and seize this momentum in pursuit of mutual interests, then better relations between the United States and Cuba will create new opportunities for cooperation across our region for the security and prosperity and health and dignity of all our people.

Now, alongside our shift toward Cuba, the United States has deepened our engagement in in America—in the Americas across the board. Since I took office, we've boosted U.S. exports and also U.S. imports from the rest of the hemisphere by over 50 percent. And that supports millions of jobs in all of our countries. I've proposed $1 billion to help the peoples of Central America strengthen governance and improve security and help to spark more economic growth and, most importantly, provide new pathways for young people who too often see their only prospects in an underground economy that too often leads to violence.

We're partnering with countries across the region to develop clean, more affordable and reliable energy that helps nations to combat the urgent threat of climate change, as President Rousseff already noted. Our 100,000 Strong in the Americas initiative is working to bring 100,000 students from Latin America to the United States and 100,000 students from the United States to Latin America. The new initiatives that I announced in Jamaica will help empower a new generation of young people across the Americas with the skills and job training that they need to compete in the global economy.

And during the course of my meetings with CARICOM, as well as my meetings with SICA, as well as the discussions that I've had with many of you bilaterally, there have been additional ideas that we're very interested in: finding ways in which we can expand access to the Internet and broadband; how we can structure private-public partnerships to rebuild infrastructure across the region; and to expand our commercial ties in a broad-based and inclusive way. Because I am firmly of the belief that we will only succeed if everybody benefits from the economic growth, not just a few at the top.

At home, I've taken executive actions to fix as much of our broken immigration system as I can, which includes trying to help people come out of the shadows so that they can live and work in a country that they called home. And that includes hundreds of thousands of young people we call DREAMers, who have already received temporary relief. And I'm remaining committed to working with our Congress on comprehensive immigration reform.

So the bottom line is this: The United States is focused on the future. We're not caught up in ideology—at least I'm not. I'm interested in progress, and I'm interested in results. I'm not interested in theoretic arguments; I'm interested in actually delivering for people. We are more deeply engaged across the region than we have been in decades. And those of you have interacted with me know that if you bring an issue to my attention, I will do my best to try to address it. I will not always be able to fix it right away, but I will do my best.

I believe the relationship between the United States and the Americas is as good as it has ever been. And I'm here today to work with you to build on this progress. Now, let me just mention a few areas in which I think we can make more progress.

First, we've—we will continue to uphold the Inter-American Democratic Charter, which states that "the peoples of the Americas have a right to democracy." I believe our governments, together, have an obligation to uphold the universal freedoms and rights of all our citizens. I want to again commend President Varela and Panama for making civil society

groups from across the region formal partners in this summit for the first time. I believe the voices of our citizens must be heard. And I believe, going forward, civil society should be a permanent part of these summits.

Second, we have to focus on reigniting economic growth that can fuel progress further in those communities that have not been reached. And that means making the Americas more competitive. We still have work to do to harmonize regulations, encourage good governance and transparency that attracts investment, invest in infrastructure, address some of the challenges that we have with respect to energy. The costs of energy in many communities—or in many countries, particularly in Central American and the Caribbean, are so high that it presents a great challenge to economic development, and we think that we can help, particularly around clean energy issues.

We have to confront the injustice of economic inequality and poverty. And I think that collectively, we are starting to identify what programs work and which programs do not work. And we should put more money in those things that do work and stop doing those things that don't. We don't have money to waste, because there are too many young people out there with enormous need. I think President Varela is right to focus particularly on education and skills building. And this is an agenda which we should all tackle collectively.

Third, we have to keep investing in the clean energy that creates jobs and combats climate change. The United States is today leading this global effort, along with many of you. And I should point out that America's carbon pollution is near its lowest level in almost two decades. Across the Americas, I think, we have the opportunity to expand our clean energy partnerships and increase our investments in renewables.

And finally, we have to stand firm for the security of our citizens. We must continue to join with our partners across the region, especially in Central America, but also in the Caribbean, to promote an approach, a holistic approach that applies rule of law, respects human rights, but also tackles the narcotraffickers that devastate so many communities. This is a shared responsibility. And I've said before that the United States has a responsibility to reduce the demand for drugs and to reduce the flow of weapons south, even as we partner with you to go after the networks that can cause so much violence.

So a new relationship with Cuba; more trade and economic partnerships that reduce poverty and create opportunity, particularly focusing on education; increased people-to-people exchanges; more investment in our young people; clean energy that combats climate change; security cooperation to protect our citizens and our communities—that's the new chapter of engagement that the United States is pursuing across the Americas.

I want to make one last comment addressing the—some of the points that President Correa raised and I'm sure will be raised by a few others during this discussion. I always enjoy the history lessons that I receive when I'm here. I'm a student of history, so I tend to actually be familiar with many of these episodes that have been mentioned. I am the first one to acknowledge that America's application of concern around human rights has not always been consistent. And I'm certainly mindful that there are dark chapters in our own history in which we have not observed the principles and ideals upon which the country was founded.

Just a few weeks ago, I was in Selma, Alabama, celebrating the 50th anniversary of a march across a bridge that resulted in horrific violence. And the reason I was there, and the reason it was a celebration, is because it was a triumph of human spirit in which ordinary people, without resort to violence, were able to overcome systematic segregation. Their voices were heard, and our country changed.

America never makes a claim about being perfect. We do make a claim about being open to change. And so I would just say that we can, I suppose, spend a lot of time talking about past grievances, and I suppose that it's possible to use the United States as a handy excuse every so often for political problems that may be occurring domestically. But that's not going to bring progress. That's not going to solve the

problems of children who can't read or don't have enough to eat. It's not going to make our countries more productive or more competitive in a global economy.

So I just want to make very clear that when we speak out on something like human rights, it's not because we think we are perfect, but it is because we think the ideal of not jailing people if they disagree with you is the right ideal.

Perhaps President Correa has more confidence than I do in distinguishing between bad press and good press. There are a whole bunch of press that I think is bad, mainly because it criticizes me, but they continue to speak out in the United States because I don't have confidence in a system in which one person is making that determination. I think that if we believe in democracy it means that everybody has the chance to speak out and offer their opinions and stand up for what they believe is right and express their conscience and pray as they would and organize and assemble as they believe is appropriate, as long as they're not operating violently.

So we will continue to speak out on those issues, not because we're interested in meddling, but because we know from our own history. It's precisely because we're imperfect that we believe it's appropriate for us to stand up. When Dr. King was in jail, people outside the United States spoke up on his behalf. And I would be betraying our history if I did not do the same.

The cold war has been over for a long time. And I'm not interested in having battles that, frankly, started before I was born. What I am interested in is solving problems, working with you. That's what the United States is interested in doing. That's why we've invested so much in our bilateral relationships, and that's why I will continue to invest in creating the kind of spirit of equal partnership and mutual interest and mutual respect upon which I believe progress can advance.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 10:30 a.m. at the ATLAPA Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to President Juan Carlos Varela of Panama; President Michelle Bachelet Jeria of Chile; President Raúl Castro Ruz of Cuba; President Dilma Rousseff of Brazil; and President Rafael Correa Delgado of Ecuador. He also referred to the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM); and the Central American Integration System (SICA).

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With President Juan Manuel Santos Calderon of Colombia in Panama City
April 11, 2015

President Obama. It is a great pleasure to once again see my good friend, President Santos, and his delegation. We've had two occasions now to visit Colombia, and I so appreciated the hospitality as well as the people there. And more importantly, the cooperation between our countries, the friendship between our countries has been producing significant results, not just for the United States and Colombia through things like our trade agreement, but also regionally, through the joint participation in a number of issues and challenges that we face.

I want to congratulate President Santos on his extraordinary efforts to bring about an end to a conflict that has plagued Colombia for too long. The United States is very proud to support that effort. I've deployed an Envoy, Bernie Aronson, with deep experience in the region, to be supportive of President Santos's efforts.

As you've heard I think from many in the plenary, this is an issue that many people care deeply about. It entails some risks. It's hard. But President Santos, I believe, is doing the right thing. And we want to be as helpful as we can in that process.

I also want to congratulate Colombia on what it's been able to achieve economically, as well as with respect to security. The United

States, I think, played an important role in that process through Plan Colombia. Although, ultimately, the progress is due to the strength and commitment and determination of the Colombian people.

So I look forward to hearing more about your plans going forward, and I appreciate all the efforts of your delegation. And I send my best wishes to the people of Colombia. Thank you again for the wonderful visits that I've been able to have. Okay?

President Santos. Thank you very much, President Obama. It's a great pleasure to see you again.

The relations between the U.S. and Colombia, I think, are at the best level ever. We are proud to be considered your strategic partners. And we have been working on many issues. Before, we concentrated on only human rights, violence, terrorism, drugs. But today we have a very, very rich agenda of education, of cooperation in technology, sports—you name it, it's there. It's a very, very rich agenda, and we are very enthusiastic about moving on all those issues and very grateful for the support you have given us in the peace process.

You've understood since the very beginning, you were one of the first people that—to be informed of, our intensions, and you've been there supporting us since the very beginning. It's for, and for the Colombian people, extremely, extremely important. And the appointment of a Special Envoy has a special significance because that means we—[*inaudible*]—the whole process and to the hemisphere.

So we hope we continue to have that support. This, in a way, is the cherry on the cake. The efforts that we have been doing jointly, Plan Colombia, is a great effort that is very successful. And if we finish that peace agreement and strengthen our democracy, we will be sort of rounded out in the best way possible.

And I want to congratulate you again for your courage for taking the step to normalize relations with Cuba. And you have seen in this summit, it's the most important event. This will have very positive repercussions in the relations between North America and Latin America and the Caribbean. And everybody south of the Rio Grande has appreciated this tremendous step and is very enthusiastic about what this is going to mean for the future of our relations.

So I hope that we can continue to work together the way we have been working. And I look forward to our conversations after the press and the public leave.

Thank you.

President Obama. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:34 p.m. at the ATLAPA Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to U.S. Special Envoy for the Colombian Peace Process Bernard W. Aronson.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With President Raúl Castro Ruz of Cuba in Panama City
April 11, 2015

President Obama. This is obviously a historic meeting. The history between the United States and Cuba is obviously complicated, and over the years, a lot of mistrust has developed. But during the course of the last several months, there have been contacts between the U.S. and the Cuban Government. And in December, as a consequence of some of the groundwork that had been laid, both myself and President Castro announced a significant change in policy and the relationship between our two governments.

I think that after 50 years of a policy that had not changed on the part of the United States, it was my belief that it was time to try something new: that it was important for us to engage more directly with the Cuban Government and the Cuban people. And as a consequence, I think we are now in a position to move on a path towards the future and leave behind some

of the circumstances of the past that have made it so difficult, I think, for our countries to communicate.

Already, we've seen majorities of the American people and the Cuban people respond positively to this change. And I truly believe that as more exchanges take place, more commerce and interactions resume between the United States and Cuba, that the deep connections between the Cuban people and the American people will reflect itself in a more positive and constructive relationship between our governments.

Now, obviously, there are still going to be deep and significant differences between our two governments. We will continue to try to lift up concerns around democracy and human rights. And as we heard from President Castro's passionate speech this morning, they will lift up concerns about U.S. policy as well. But I think what we have both concluded is that we can disagree with a spirit of respect and civility and that, over time, it is possible for us to turn the page and develop a new relationship between our two countries.

And some of our immediate tasks include normalizing diplomatic relations and ultimately opening an Embassy in Havana and Cuba being able to open an Embassy in Washington, DC, so that our diplomats are able to interact on a more regular basis.

So I want to thank President Castro for the spirit of openness and courtesy that he has shown during our interactions. And I think that if we can build on this spirit of mutual respect and candidness, that over time, we will see not just a transformation in the relationship between our two countries, but a positive impact throughout the hemisphere and the world.

And President Castro earlier today spoke about the significant hardships that the people of Cuba have undergone over many decades. I can say with all sincerity that the essence of my policy is to do whatever I can to make sure that the people of Cuba are able to prosper and live in freedom and security and enjoy a connection with the world where their incredible talents and ingenuity and hard work can thrive.

President Castro. Muchas gracias.

President Obama. Thank you.

President Castro. Well, Mr. President, friends from the press, we have been making long speeches and listening to many long speeches too—[*laughter*]—so I do not want to abuse the time of President Obama or your time.

I think that what President Obama has just said, it's practically the same as we feel about these topics, including human rights, freedom of the press. We have said on previous occasions to some American friends that we are willing to discuss every issue between the United States and Cuba. We are willing to discuss about those issues that I have mentioned and about many others, as these reforms, both in Cuba, but also in the United States.

I think that everything can be on the table. I think that we can do it, as President Obama has just said, with respect for the ideas of the other. We could be persuaded of some things; of others, we might not be persuaded. But when I say that I agree with everything that the President has just said, I include that we have agreed to disagree. No one should entertain illusions. It is true that we have many differences. Our countries have a long and complicated history behind them, but we are willing to make progress in the way the President has described.

We can develop a friendship between our two peoples. We shall continue advancing in the meetings which are taking place in order to reestablish relations between our countries. We shall open our Embassies. We shall visit each other, have exchanges, people to people. And now all that matters is what close neighbors can do; we are close neighbors, and there are many things that we can have.

So we are willing to discuss everything, but we need to be patient, very patient. Some things we will agree on; others we will disagree. The pace of life at the present moment in the world, it's very fast. We might disagree on something today on which we could agree tomorrow. And we hope that our closest assistants—part of them are here with us

today—we hope that they will follow the instructions of both Presidents.

Thank you so much.

[*At this point, President Obama and President Castro shook hands.*]

President Castro. Muchas gracias.

President Obama. Thank you.

Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:46 p.m. at the ATLAPA Convention Center. President Castro spoke in Spanish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With President Dilma Rousseff of Brazil in Panama City

April 11, 2015

President Obama. Well, it is wonderful to be able to meet once again with my good friend, President Rousseff, and her delegation.

[*At this point, an interpreter began to translate for President Rousseff. President Rousseff spoke in English as follows.*]

President Rousseff. I understand. [*Laughter*]

President Obama. She doesn't need a translator. [*Laughter*]

Brazil is obviously not only one of the most important countries in the hemisphere, but is a global leader on a whole range of issues. And so I'm looking forward to this meeting where we can discuss furthering the cooperation that we already have on a whole range of issues, including climate change, energy, educational exchanges, and science and technology.

I'm also very pleased that President Rousseff is going to be able to visit Washington at the end of June, on June 30, where we'll be able not only to deepen our discussions, but also put forward some very concrete plans for mutual cooperation in these areas.

So let me just say, once again, thank you to President Rousseff for her leadership and her friendship. And I'm looking forward to a very productive meeting.

President Rousseff. I would also like to say that, to me, it is of course very important that we, the U.S. and Brazil, be able to ensure continuity of our relations. Brazil and the U.S. have had a very longstanding track record in our bilateral relations and, I think, a very solid one.

We have before us a wide array of different topics in the areas that can serve as subjects for further cooperation, not only between the two countries, but also throughout Latin America and the world at large. May I quote just one example of an area for fruitful cooperation, such as climate change, which is not only a pressing need, but also a much-needed area for joint initiatives in the world at large? Brazil has experienced a very harsh drought. The U.S., in turn, has experienced a very rigorous winter. So the climate change agenda is an illustration, a clear-cut example of where we can cooperate jointly.

Science and technology, education, as well as all manners pertaining to economic growth are just examples of what we can do together to improve and boost the quality of our production activity, which is key for Brazil and which I think will help us elevate our relations to a higher threshold than it is currently today.

I am very much pleased to learn about the upcoming visit on July the 30th in the United States and do look forward to that occasion.

President Obama. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:15 p.m. at the ATLAPA Convention Center. President Rousseff spoke in Portuguese, and her remarks were translated by an interpreter.

The President's News Conference in Panama City
April 11, 2015

The President. Good afternoon, everybody. I want to begin by once again thanking President Varela and the people of Panama City and all the Panamanian people for being such excellent hosts at this Summit of the Americas. Given its strategic location—a place where cultures and commerce of our hemisphere have long intersected—Panama has often been called the "crossroads of the world." And with Panama's leadership, our nations have come together to focus on the world, on the future, and on what we can build for the 1 billion people of the Americas.

This has been my third Summit of the Americas and my eighth visit to Latin America. And my trip reflects, as I mentioned earlier, a new era of U.S. engagement in the region. Over the past few days, we've advanced our engagement across the board.

In keeping with the Inter-American Democratic Charter, we continue to stand up strongly for democracy and human rights. This was the first Summit of the Americas to include a formal role for civil society. As I said at yesterday's forum, the United States will continue to deepen our support for civil society groups across the Americas and around the world. I'm pleased that there was widespread agreement among the nations here that civil society groups have a permanent role in future summits. And the United States will support this work through the new innovation center we're creating to empower civil society groups across Latin America.

How to promote greater opportunity for the Cuban people was also a major focus of my meeting with President Castro, the first between leaders of our two nations in more than half a century. I told President Castro in private what I've said in public: that our governments will continue to have differences and the United States will continue to stand firmly for universal values and human rights. At the same time, we agreed that we can continue to take steps forward that advance our mutual interests. We'll continue to work toward reestablishing diplomatic relations, reopening Embassies in Havana and Washington, and encouraging greater contacts and commerce and exchanges between our citizens.

I'm optimistic that we'll continue to make progress and that this can indeed be a turning point, not just between the United States and Cuba, but for greater cooperation among countries across the region.

Second, we continued our work to create more prosperity and opportunity for our people. At our meeting yesterday, Central American leaders reaffirmed their commitment to pursue the good governance and economic and security reforms that are needed, and I reiterated my commitment to work with Congress to secure the $1 billion I've proposed for our engagement with Central America. Yesterday's deal between Boeing and Copa Airlines will support jobs in the United States, in Panama, and across the region and, I think, is representative of the commercial opportunities that allow both north and southern hemispheres—both North and South America, as well as Central America to prosper if we deepen those trade ties.

I was encouraged by the support of many leaders here for the WTO Trade Facilitation agreement, which would boost regional trade, and for the Trans-Pacific Partnership, with its high standards for trade and strong protections for workers and the environment.

Thanks to Panama's leadership, this summit included a special focus on how countries can expand access to education. I want to thank our private sector partners who pledged to continue their support of our 100,000 Strong in the Americas initiative to encourage more exchanges between our students. The nearly $70 million in investments that I've announced in Jamaica will expand education and training and employment programs for young people across Latin America and the Caribbean, including the impoverished and marginalized communities. And the Young Leaders of the Americas Initiative that I launched will

help young entrepreneurs and civil society leaders across the entire region access the training and the resources and connections they need to start new ventures, including the small businesses that create so many jobs in the region.

Finally, we took new steps to invest in clean energy and combat climate change. The new fund I announced with our Caribbean and Central American partners will help mobilize private sector investment in clean energy projects and reduce carbon emissions across the region, and our new energy task force will identify additional steps we can take together. A number of our countries committed to doubling our collective share of nonhydro renewable energy by 2030. I reaffirmed that, through our $3 billion pledge to the Green Climate Fund, the United States will continue to help developing nations deal with the impacts of climate change. And I reiterated our commitment to ensure that all countries in the hemisphere have open access to climate data as we meet this challenge together.

So continued progress on Cuba, new commitments to help lift up young people in the region, new partnerships to protect this beautiful land and our planet. As I said this morning, the United States is more deeply engaged across the region than we have been in decades, and I believe the relationship between the United States and the Americas is as good as it has ever been. We're focused on the future and what we can build and achieve together. And our engagement with the countries and peoples of the Americas is going to continue throughout the remainder of my Presidency.

So with that, let me take some questions. I'll start with Jim Kuhnhenn [Associated Press].

Cuba/Iran/Congressional Criticism of the President's Iran Policy/U.S. Foreign Policy

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Sir, you head back to the United States with the task of convincing the American people and Congress on two major foreign policy initiatives—the framework for a nuclear deal with Iran and, likely soon, the decision to remove Cuba from a list of state sponsors of terror. Recently, remarks by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei have raised doubts among some as to whether that deal can occur in Iran. And Senator Schumer, an ally of yours, has—wants Congress to have the right to vote on removal of sanctions. Presidential politics are likely to play a part in this Cuba decision inevitably. So I'm wondering if it would take a lot of political capital just to get one done, let alone two. Have you bitten off more than you can chew?

The President. No. [*Laughter*] You may be surprised by that response, Jim. Let me take them in turn.

First of all, with respect to Cuba, there is majority support of our policy in the United States, and there's overwhelming support for our policy in Cuba. I think people recognize that if you keep on doing something for 50 years and it doesn't work, you should try something new.

And so the American people don't need to be persuaded that this is, in fact, the right thing to do. I recognize that there are still concerns and questions that Congress may have; we've got concerns and questions about specific activities that are taking place in Cuba and human rights and reform. And there were two members of the Cuban civil society that were in attendance at the meeting that I had yesterday who expressed much of what they have to go through on a day-to-day basis. They were supportive of our policy of engagement with Cuba.

And so I don't think that it's so much we have to persuade anybody. The issue of the state sponsor of terrorism list, as you know, the State Department has provided a recommendation; it's gone through our interagency process. I'll be honest with you, I have been on the road, and I want to make sure that I have a chance to read it, study it, before we announce publicly what the policy outcome is going to be.

But in terms of the overall direction of Cuba policy, I think there is a strong majority both in the United States and in Cuba that says our ability to engage, to open up commerce and travel and people-to-people exchanges is ultimately going to be good for the Cuban people.

Now, with respect to Iran, I have always been clear: We are not done yet. What we were able to obtain was a political framework between the P5-plus-1 nations and Iran that provided unprecedented verification of what is taking place in Iran over the next two decades that significantly cuts back on its centrifuges, that cuts off pathways for it to obtain a nuclear weapon, and that calls for, in return, the rolling back of sanctions in a phased way that allows us to snap back if Iran violates the agreement. That's the political framework. That was not just something that the United States and Iran agreed to, but Iran agreed to a political framework with the other P5-plus-1 nations.

Now, what's always been clear is, is that Iran has its own politics around this issue. They have their own hardliners. They have their own countervailing impulses in terms of whether or not to go forward with something, just as we have in our country. And so it's not surprising to me that the Supreme Leader or a whole bunch of other people are going to try to characterize the deal in a way that protects their political position. But I know what was discussed at—in arriving at the political agreement.

What I've always said, though, is that there's the possibility of backsliding. There's the possibility that it doesn't get memorialized in a way that satisfies us that we're able to verify that, in fact, Iran is not getting a nuclear weapon and that we are preserving the capacity to snap back sanctions in the event that they are breaking any deal.

And that's why the work is going to be so important between now and the end of June to memorialize this so that we can all examine it. And we don't have to speculate on what the meaning of a deal is going to be. Either there's going to be a document that Iran agrees with the world community about and a series of actions that have to be taken, or there's not. Part of the challenge in this whole process has been, opponents of basically any deal with Iran have constantly tried to characterize what the deal is without seeing it.

Now, if we are able to obtain a final deal that comports with the political agreement—and I say "if" because that's not yet final—then I'm absolutely positive that that is the best way to prevent Iran from getting a nuclear weapon. And that's not my opinion; that's the opinion of people like Ernie Moniz, my Secretary of Energy, who is a physicist from MIT and actually knows something about this stuff. That's the opinion of a whole bunch of nuclear experts who examined the deal.

I mean, very rarely do you see a consensus—"consensus" too strong a word—a large majority of people who are experts in the field saying this is actually a realistic, plausible, meaningful approach to cut off the pathways for Iran getting a nuclear weapon and that it is more likely to succeed not only than maintaining current sanctions or additional sanctions, but more likely to succeed than if we took a military approach to solving the problem.

Again, that's not uniquely my opinion. That is—talk to the people who are not affiliated with the administration, some of whom were skeptical about our capacity to get a deal done and have now looked at it and said if we're able to actually get what was discussed in the political framework, it's absolutely the right thing to do.

Now, there's politics and political pressure inside of the United States. We all know that. The Prime Minister of Israel is deeply opposed to it. I think he's made that very clear. And I have repeatedly asked, what is the alternative that you present that you think makes it less likely for Iran to get a nuclear weapon? And I have yet to obtain a good answer on that.

And the narrow question that's going to be presented next week when Congress comes back is, what's Congress's appropriate role in looking at a final deal? And I've talked to not only Bob Corker, but I've talked to Ben Cardin, the ranking member on the Democratic side. And I want to work with them so that Congress can look at this deal when it's done. What I'm concerned about is making sure that we don't prejudge it or those who are opposed to any deal whatsoever try to use a procedural argument essentially to screw up the possibility of a deal.

Last comment I'm going to make on this: When I hear some, like Senator McCain

recently, suggest that our Secretary of State, John Kerry, who served in the United States Senate, a Vietnam veteran, who's provided exemplary service to this Nation, is somehow less trustworthy in the interpretation of what's in a political agreement than the Supreme Leader of Iran, that's an indication of the degree to which partisanship has crossed all boundaries. And we're seeing this again and again. We saw it with the letter by the 47 Senators who communicated directly—[*laughter*]—to the Supreme Leader of Iran—the person that they say can't be trusted at all—warning him not to trust the United States Government.

We have Mitch McConnell trying to tell the world, oh, don't have confidence in the U.S. Government's abilities to fulfill any climate change pledge that we might make. And now we have a Senator suggesting that our Secretary of State is purposely misinterpreting the deal and giving the Supreme Leader of Iran the benefit of the doubt in the interpretations.

That's not how we're supposed to run foreign policy, regardless of who is President or Secretary of State. We can have arguments, and there are legitimate arguments to be had. I understand why people might be mistrustful of Iran. I understand why people might oppose the deal, although the reason is not because this is a bad deal per se, but they just don't trust any deal with Iran and may prefer to take a military approach to it.

But when you start getting to the point where you are actively communicating that the United States Government and our Secretary of State is somehow spinning presentations in a negotiation with a foreign power, particularly one that you say is your enemy, that's a problem. It needs to stop.

Jim Acosta [CNN]. Oh, I'm sorry, where's Jim?

Q. Right here.

The President. There you are.

President Raúl Castro Ruz of Cuba/Cuba-U.S. Relations/Former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton

Q. Thank you very much, Mr. President. I was wondering if you were struck by Raúl Castro's warm words for you today. He said he admired you, said he had read some of your autobiographies, described you as an honest man. I'm just curious what you thought about that. And do you feel that Raúl Castro is an honest man and can be trusted?

And I would be remiss if I didn't ask you about another Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, who is expected to announce her campaign for the Presidency tomorrow. Do you foresee being involved in her campaign? And do you hope that she runs on your record? Thank you very much.

The President. It was a candid and fruitful conversation between me and Raúl Castro. I can tell you that, in the conversations I've had so far with him—two on the phone and, most recently, face to face—that we are able to speak honestly about our differences and our concerns in ways that I think offer the possibility of moving the relationship between our two countries in a different and better direction.

We have very different views of how society should be organized. And I was very direct with him that we are not going to stop talking about issues like democracy and human rights and freedom of assembly and freedom of the press, not because we think we are perfect and that every country has to mimic us exactly, but because there are a set of universal principles for which we stand.

And one of the goals of my administration is to have some consistency in speaking out on behalf of those who oftentimes don't have a voice. And I think during his speech in the plenary session, he was pretty clear about areas of U.S. policy he doesn't like, and I suspect he's going to continue to speak out on those.

What's been clear from this entire summit, though, is the unanimity with which, regardless of their ideological predispositions, the leaders of Latin America think this is the right thing to do. Because what they see is the possibility of a more constructive dialogue that ultimately benefits the Cuban people and removes what too often has been a distraction or an excuse from the hemisphere acting on important challenges that we face.

So I am cautiously optimistic that over the coming months and coming years that the process that we've initiated—at first announced in December, reaffirmed here at the Summit of the Americas—will lead to a different future for the Cuban people and a different relationship between the United States and Cuba.

With respect to Hillary Clinton, I'll make my comments very brief. She was a formidable candidate in 2008. She was a great supporter of mine in the general election. She was an outstanding Secretary of State. She is my friend. I think she would be an excellent President. And I'm not on the ballot, so I'm not going to step on her lines. When she makes a decision to announce, I'm confident that she will be very clear about her vision for the country moving forward, if she announces.

And in terms of her relationship with my administration, she was focused and working on really important foreign policy initiatives. And the one thing I can say is that she's going to be able to handle herself very well in any conversations or debates around foreign policy. And her track record with respect to domestic policy is, I think, one that cares about working families. If she decides to run, if she makes an announcement, she's going to have some strong messages to deliver.

Jim Avila [ABC News].

Q. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Yes.

2016 Presidential Election/Cuba-U.S. Relations/U.S. Foreign Policy

Q. First of all, on Cuba, if I could, two questions. The Cuban Government has frequently said that it cannot allow more political or personal freedoms or press freedoms, because the United States has used both covert and otherwise actions to try to overthrow the Castros. Does your new era, in fact, end regime change efforts by the United States? And should the Cubans then respond by allowing free elections and tolerance of dissent now because of the changed policy?

And secondly, on the issue of Hillary Clinton, Vice President Biden, of course, said that the Democratic race is wide open. The polls seem to say otherwise. What is your opinion on that? Is the race still wide open?

The President. Not only have I run my last election, but I am not in the business of prognosticating future elections. That is your job. [*Laughter*] And there's no shortage of people who are happy to opine on that. I will not be one of them.

On Cuba, we are not in the business of regime change. We are in the business of making sure the Cuban people have freedom and the ability to participate and shape their own destiny and their own lives and supporting civil society.

And there's going to be an evolution, regardless of what we do, inside of Cuba. Partly, it's going to be generational. If you listened to President Castro's comments earlier this morning, a lot of the points he made referenced actions that took place before I was born, and part of my message here is, the cold war is over. There's still a whole lot of challenges that we face and a lot of issues around the world, and we're still going to have serious issues with Cuba on not just the Cuban Government's approach to its own people, but also regional issues and concerns. There are going to be areas where we cooperate as well. Cuban doctors deployed during the Ebola crisis made a difference; Cuban activity in Haiti in the wake of the earthquake made a difference. And so there may be areas of collaboration as well.

What I said to President Castro is the same thing that I've said to leaders throughout the region: We have a point of view, and we won't be shy about expressing it. But I'm confident that the way to lift up the values that we care about is through persuasion. And that's going to be the primary approach that we take on a whole host of these issues, primarily because they don't implicate our national security in a direct way.

And I think that we have to be very clear: Cuba is not a threat to the United States. That doesn't mean we don't have differences with it. But on the list of threats that I'm concerned about, I think it's fair to say that between ISIL and Iran getting a nuclear weapon and

activities in Yemen and Libya and Boko Haram, Russian aggression in Ukraine and our—the impact on our allies there—I could go down a pretty long list—climate change. [*Laughter*] So our—I think our approach has to be one of trying to work with the region and other countries and be very clear about what we believe and what we stand for and what we think works and what doesn't.

And so often, when we insert ourselves in ways that go beyond persuasion, it's counterproductive. It backfires. That's been part of our history, and—which is why countries keep on trying to use us as an excuse for their own governance failures. Let's take away the excuse. And let's be clear that we're prepared to partner and engage with everybody to try to lift up opportunity and prosperity and security for people in the region.

Major Garrett [CBS News].

Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Hoseini-Khamenei of Iran/Iran's Nuclear Weapons Program

Q. Good afternoon, Mr. President. Allow me, if you will, to correct—to quote the Supreme Leader directly.

The President. Yes.

Q. The United States activity since the announcement of the framework has been deceptive, it is lying, it is devilish. And on two particular points, he said—direct quotes—"Iran's military sites cannot be inspected under the excuse of nuclear supervision," and "all sanctions should be removed when the deal is signed."

Is it your opinion, Mr. President, that this is pure posturing and it should be disregarded by your Government and by you and your Secretary of State? And if so, could you help me understand to whom the Supreme Leader would be posturing? Because under my limited understanding of Iranian politics, that's not a job description usually applied to the Supreme Leader.

The President. That was a well-crafted question, Garrett—Major. [*Laughter*] And let me just suggest that even a guy with the title Supreme Leader has to be concerned about his own constituencies. And the issue is not whether I have to take his word for whether that's his understanding, because we've got work until the end of June to see if we've got a document that works. And if that is his understanding and his position, in ways that can't be squared with our concern about being able to embark on vigorous inspections to assure that Iran isn't cheating under any program and that we don't have the capacity to snap back sanctions when we see a potential violation, then we're probably not going to get a deal.

So part of the concern that I have in this debate here, Major, is I don't understand why it is that everybody is working so hard to anticipate failure. The opponents of the deal don't seem to be focused on how do we get to a good deal as much as they're focused on how can we show that it's not possible to get a good deal. And my simple point is, let's wait and see what the deal is, and we'll be able to look. And if in fact we're not satisfied that it cuts off the pathways for Iran obtaining a nuclear weapon, then we won't sign it.

If, on the other hand, it does, then I will strongly argue—and I believe the American people will support and the international community will support—that it's far preferable to the other alternatives.

Now, Major, it's not going to be perfect, in the sense that if you asked Prime Minister Netanyahu or some members of the Republican caucus or even some Democrats. If you ask me, would I prefer that Iran never had, never did have, will never have even a single nut, bolt, anything related to nuclear power, don't have any nuclear scientists, don't have any capacity to develop it, that would be great. But that's not possible. That's not achievable. That's not achievable through sanctions; it's not achievable through military means.

They're going to have some form of peaceful nuclear power, and that will then pose a challenge for the international community, which is why the political agreement calls for unprecedented framework of inspections that allows us to assure that it's not being used or diverted in ways that could be weaponized.

But we're going to have to see whether or not we can get a deal or not. My only question

is why we keep on trying to short-circuit the actual negotiations. When they—nobody is—we're not disarming. We're not getting rid of our nuclear weapons. We're not getting rid of our Navy. We're not giving anything up. We are simply waiting to see what it is that the negotiators come up with. And if in fact we are able to come up with something that works, then we'll know.

And with respect to the Supreme Leader, yes, because that's a pretty important title. It seems a little more clear cut than President. On the other hand, there may be ways of structuring a final deal that satisfy their pride, their optics, their politics, but meet our core practical objectives. And that's what we've got to give the negotiators room to determine.

Last question. Karen DeYoung [Washington Post]. Where's Karen? There she is.

Iran/Cuba-U.S. Relations

Q. Thank you. Just to belabor the point on that question, Mr. President, the—your people have said that the framework agreement, that what's in it stands, that they are not renegotiable points, although the implementation of them can be renegotiated in some way. And I wonder how, within that framework that's already been agreed, how we can come up with something that satisfies the kinds of concerns that he raised: no inspection of military sites, immediate lifting of all sanctions the day that the thing is signed.

And also, on Cuba, I wanted to ask, as you discussed the state sponsor of terrorism list with President Castro, the Cubans have raised some issues about the 45-day waiting period. I wondered if that came up. I know that your government is eager, assuming that the recommendation is approved—is to remove it and is approved by you—that we move ahead quickly with Embassies. The Cubans have raised concerns about that 45 days and how something could go wrong in those 45 days. And it really doesn't give them access to the kinds of things they think they can have once the—they're—if and when they're removed from the list. Did that come up? And is it your belief that once they're removed from the list, then there is no impediment to go ahead with opening Embassies, once you approve their removal from the list?

The President. Okay. So I'll make one last run at Iran here. There's a political framework, the outlines of which were established between Iran and the P5-plus-1. In some cases, there was great specificity around, for example, the reductions that need to take place in the number of centrifuges in Natanz or the conversion of Fordow into a facility that does not permit the potential production of weapons-grade uranium. And in other cases, there were—there was language of intent, but the details matter. And how those details are interpreted are going to be subject to negotiation.

So it's not accurate to suggest that—and I don't think my team has ever suggested that—somehow everything is all done and it's just a matter of writing it up. This is a situation in which we have a framework that is, if implemented, powerful and will achieve our goal of making sure that Iran doesn't have a nuclear weapon. But the details make a big difference, how they're structured. And I guarantee you, there will be some tough negotiations around that.

And that's what I said the first day when we announced that we had an agreement, and that's what we've continued to say. So there's really no contradiction here. And keep in mind that when we started this process off, even with the interim agreement, when we signed the JPOA way back at the beginning of this whole thing, there was a similar back-and-forth in terms of interpretation of how this was going to be implemented. And the Iranians were saying that's not true, and we were saying this. But once we actually got through the negotiations, it turned out that we had something that was substantial, that was subject to review by everybody involved, and that has proven to be highly effective, even by the assessments of critics of the policy like the Israelis. They've said, yes, this actually has worked, Iran has abided by the agreement. In fact, now they're suggesting, why don't we just stay here, it's worked so well, despite the fact that they had made almost the precise same argument

they're making now about the final deal. But consistency is the hobgoblin of narrow minds.

Cuba. I will tell you, we did not get into the level of detail, Karen, that you just described. And I'm impressed with how many details you seem to be aware of. [*Laughter*] As I said before, the state sponsor of terrorism recommendation will be coming to me. I will read it; I'll review it. There's a process whereby if in fact I accept those recommendations, Congress has an opportunity to review it as well, and it will be there for people to see.

I think that the concerns around the Embassy are going to be mostly on the Cuban side. They haven't dealt with an American Embassy in Cuba in quite some time. And changing in this way is, I'm sure, an unsettling process. We're accustomed to this. I mean, we've gone through now a number of times where, with China and with Vietnam and other countries, we opened—reopened diplomatic relations, and we understand, I think, are familiar with, how that gets done in a way that's consistent with improving diplomatic relations over the long term. This is probably a more profound shift for them than it is for us.

But we stand ready to move forward. We're confident that it can lead to an improved dialogue. And our bottom line in the end is, is that it can lead to an improved set of prospects for the Cuban people.

And I'll say just in closing, to all the people here from Latin American countries, thank you for this extraordinary opportunity. I want to thank the people of Panama. I am very optimistic about this region, and the main reason I'm optimistic about this region is because of its people. They are extraordinary. And it is a great gift to the United States to be able to have such strong friends and partners in tackling many of the challenges that we have in common.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 5:26 p.m. at the ATLAPA Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to lawyer Laritza Diversent and political activist Manuel Cuesta Morúa, who met with the President as representative members of Cuban civil society; Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel; Sens. Robert P. Corker, Jr., and Benjamin L. Cardin, in their respective capacities as chairman and ranking member of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization; and the Joint Plan of Action (JPOA) regarding Iran's nuclear program reached by the U.S., China, France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom, and Iran on November 24, 2013. A reporter referred to former President Fidel Castro Ruz of Cuba.

Memorandum on Delegation of Reporting Functions Specified in Section 1637(a) of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015
April 13, 2015

Memorandum for the Director of National Intelligence

Subject: Delegation of Reporting Functions Specified in Section 1637(a) of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, including section 301 of title 3, United States Code, I hereby delegate the reporting functions conferred upon the President by section 1637(a) of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015 (Public Law 113–291) to the Director of National Intelligence.

You are authorized and directed to publish this memorandum in the *Federal Register*.

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: This memorandum was not received for publication in the *Federal Register*.

Message to the Senate Transmitting the United States-Japan Taxation Convention
April 13, 2015

To the Senate of the United States:

I transmit herewith, for the advice and consent of the Senate to its ratification, the Protocol Amending the Convention between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of Japan for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with respect to Taxes on Income and a related agreement entered into by an exchange of notes (together the "proposed Protocol"), both signed on January 24, 2013, at Washington, together with correcting notes exchanged March 9 and March 29, 2013. I also transmit for the information of the Senate the report of the Department of State, which includes an overview of the proposed Protocol.

The proposed Protocol was negotiated to bring U.S.-Japan tax treaty relations into closer conformity with current U.S. tax treaty policy. For example, the proposed Protocol provides for an exemption from source-country withholding tax on all cross-border payments of interest, and updates the provisions of the existing Convention with respect to the mutual agreement procedure by incorporating mandatory arbitration of certain cases that the competent authorities of the United States and Japan have been unable to resolve after a reasonable period of time.

I recommend that the Senate give early and favorable consideration to the proposed Protocol and give its advice and consent to its ratification.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
April 13, 2015.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi of Iraq and an Exchange With Reporters
April 14, 2015

President Obama. It is good to welcome once again Prime Minister Abadi to the United States and to the Oval Office. Prime Minister Abadi, when he came into the office, was already facing significant challenges. And obviously, the incursions of ISIL, also known as Daesh, into Iraq pose not only a humanitarian threat, but a strategic threat to the country.

Thanks to his leadership, as well as the partnership and sacrifices made by over 60 members of an international coalition, we are making serious progress in pushing back ISIL out of Iraqi territory. About a quarter of the territory that had fallen under Daesh control has been recovered. Thousands of strikes have not only taken ISIL fighters off the war theater, but their infrastructure has been deteriorated and decayed. And under Prime Minister Abadi's leadership, the Iraqi security forces have been rebuilt and are getting reequipped, retrained, and strategically deployed across the country.

Now, this is a long process, and in our discussions, Prime Minister Abadi made clear that success will not occur overnight. But what is clear is that we will be successful. And part of that success is Prime Minister Abadi's commitment to an inclusive Government where Shia, Sunni, and Kurds and all the peoples of Iraq are unified around that nation's sovereignty and its ability to control its own destiny.

And in a significant change from some past practices, I think both Sunni leaders and Kurdish leaders feel that they are heard in the halls of power, that they are participating in governance in Baghdad. And although there is the natural back-and-forth that exists in any democracy, Prime Minister Abadi has kept true

to his commitments to reach out to them and to respond to their concerns and to make sure that power is not solely concentrated within Baghdad, but also that there's local governance that has the opportunity to respond to the specific needs of the people in those communities.

So we had an in-depth discussion about the ways in which we continue to partner together with the international coalition to push out foreign fighters who are encroaching on Iraqi territory and sovereignty and perpetrating terrible acts across the country.

We discussed how we can be supportive of the progress that's being made in shaping an inclusive governance agenda. I emphasized that the United States prime interest is to defeat ISIL and to respect Iraqi sovereignty, and that will continue to be our policy. And we discussed how we can be helpful in making sure that as security improves inside of Iraq, we're also paying attention to the economy of Iraq, the ways in which the country can not only maximize the efficiency of its oil resources, but diversify its economy so that it presents more opportunities and jobs and prosperity for the Iraqi people.

And finally, I complimented the Prime Minister on the outreach that's taking place throughout the region so that countries that previously have been suspicious of Iraq or had not established the kinds of diplomatic relations that are necessary for good, neighborly relations, I think, are seeing that Prime Minister Abadi is, in fact, committed to all the people of Iraq. And he's gained the respect of other leaders in the region. That ultimately is also going to be extremely helpful in us defeating ISIL and allowing Iraq to move forward and fulfill the promise that its people represent.

And finally, in recognition of the terrible hardships that so many Iraqis have gone through as a consequence of ISIL's brutal activities and the displacements that have taken place, we are committing an additional $200 million in humanitarian aid to help stabilize communities and to help those who have been displaced from their homes, have lost their jobs, have seen their property destroyed. I think it's very important for us to remember that this is not just an abstract issue, that there are individual families and children who have suffered as a consequence of ISIL's activities. And we need to make sure that we're paying attention to them as well.

So, Mr. Prime Minister, thank you for your leadership, and thank you for honoring the sacrifices that so many of the U.S. Armed Forces personnel, our men and women in uniform, have made to ensure a sovereign Iraq that can make its own decisions and shape its own destiny. That is our primary goal, and we feel we have a strong partner in you.

Prime Minister Abadi. In the name of God the Merciful and the Compassionate, I would like to thank President Obama for this opportunity to be here so that we can enhance the bilateral relationship between our two countries, which is framed by the strategic partnership agreement that has been ratified by the Iraqi Parliament and the U.S.—and the U.N. and the U.S. And it represents also and embodies the interest of both countries.

Mr. President, as you know, Iraq is today facing fierce attack by terrorists. And this is not only undermining the security in the region, but also in the world. And so far, Iraq has managed to make great strides in this regard and to liberate a large part of its territory with support from the coalition, but especially from the U.S. And this has had the greatest impact.

I am certain, Mr. President, that the American people have made great sacrifices for the sake of Iraq, and the blood of its sons and daughters is mixed also with the blood of the Iraqis. But I can assure you that these sacrifices will not go to waste. Iraq has made great strides so far in achieving democracy and establishing its sovereignty. And this—and now we have a very strong relationship against terrorism.

Today, Mr. President, in spite of the war that we are facing, there's a real working democracy in Iraq. We have political parties, we have a Parliament, we have a national unity Government that is unique in the region, and I don't—I can't think of any other country in the region that has a similar government. These

are real successes, and they make all the sacrifices of the U.S. worthwhile.

Today, we are facing the challenge that is before us, and we have to face it. We are working together with countries in the region and with our neighboring countries, also the—with the international community and the U.S., so that we can face this evil. Today, Daesh, or ISIL, is committing heinous crimes in Iraq. It's killing the Iraqis and the minorities and also desecrating holy places in Iraq. Today, also, in this fierce war against ISIL, or Daesh, we still respect human rights, and we make sure that they are well respected.

I have to admit that there are some violations—human rights violations being committed by some criminal parties and outliers, and—but we have zero tolerance for any violations of human rights. And we—when we manage to capture these people, we are bringing them before the judicial system, and we punish them. And indeed, we have arrested many Iraqis who have been involved in this. We are engaged in the war against Daesh, but—and the security forces and the Iraqis are all engaged in this effort. But unfortunately, there are some criminal elements and some individuals—it's not an institutional approach; rather, it's individuals. So once we manage to capture them, we bring them to the judicial system, and we try to prevent them from committing any transgressions.

We are also keen to bring all fighters under the control of the state and under the command of the chief—the commander of the armed forces. We have tens of thousands of volunteers who have volunteered to defend their country and fight ISIL. Unfortunately, some of them commit acts that harm the reputation of Iraq, but the general mobilization is not responsible for these crimes, and these are also just individual instances of people who are trying to undermine the reputation of Iraq.

Mr. President, I wanted to thank you for your support for Iraq. Whether it's through training or the provision of weapons or even the air cover that you have provided to the Iraqi security forces in their fight against ISIL, you have helped our forces in this national liberation war that it's engaged in.

And I also want to thank you, Mr. President, for your emphasis on the importance of the Iraqi sovereignty. This is a matter that is reflected in our dealings with U.S. officials in Iraq and through your own—whether through its—the military or U.S. officials there, they all exhibit serious commitment to Iraqi sovereignty, and I want to thank you for that.

I am aware that regional countries have their own interests, and I respect these interests, and—but I also welcome any assistance that they would provide, and we would like—I would like to thank them also for any assistance they have provided. However, we do not accept any intervention in Iraq or any transgression on Iraqi sovereignty. This is a war that is fought with Iraqi blood with help from the coalition forces and regional countries.

Certainly, the region is experiencing serious turmoil. There are serious problems and numerous problems in the region. We are hopeful that they will be resolved peacefully. Iraq, for its part, does not intervene in other countries, and we hope that for their part, they would also respect our sovereignty. We also have to respect the humanitarian aspect of these wars, and we hope that there would be more cooperation to minimize crises in the regions.

Iraq has paid dearly with the blood of its own sons and daughters for these wars and also the—also for the factional wars that have raged in the region. And we hope that the region will experience peace and that the specter of war would recede from this region, which has affected all aspects of life, but also resulted in poor economic performance. And also, I believe that the absence of good governance has been one of the main reasons for these wars.

Mr. President, we have a common enemy in fighting terrorism, which is threatening Iraq, U.S. lives, the West, and the entire world. And—but I'm certain that we will be able to defeat this enemy and minimize the losses that will be incurred as a result. And this can be done through cooperation and respect for

sovereignty. And once again, I would like to thank you for this invitation to be here.

Iraq-Iran Relations/Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) Terrorist Organization/International Assistance to Iraq

Q. Mr. President, are you——

Q. Mr. President—[*inaudible*]—of Iran's involvement in Iraq, and are you comfortable with the level of coordination that's been going on with Iran, even if it's through a third party?

President Obama. This is something that we discussed extensively. I think that—I've said before, and I will repeat—we expect Iran to have an important relationship with Iraq as a close neighbor. And obviously, the fact that Iraq is a Shia-majority country means that it will be influenced and have relations with Iran as well. And at the point in which Daesh, or ISIL, was surging and the Iraqi Government was still getting organized at that point, I think the mobilization of Shia militias was something that was understood to protect Baghdad or other critical areas.

Once Prime Minister Abadi took power, once he reorganized the Government and the security forces, once the coalition came in a—at the invitation of and in an agreement with a sovereign Iraqi Government, then our expectation is, from that point on, any foreign assistance that is helping to defeat ISIL has to go through the Iraqi Government. That's how you respect Iraqi sovereignty. That's how you recognize the democratic government that was hard earned and that is being upheld in the work that Prime Minister Abadi is doing in reaching out to all the various factions inside of Iraq.

And so I think Prime Minister Abadi's position has been that he welcomes help, as you just heard, but it needs to be help that is not simply coordinated with the Iraqi Government, but ultimately, is answerable to the Iraqi Government and is funneled through the chain of command within the Iraqi Government. And that's what we've been very careful to do. I've made clear from the outset that ISIL was an enemy, and we will make sure that they do not threaten the United States, and we will go after them wherever they are. But when we are working with a strong ally and partner like Iraq, it is very important for us to coordinate our activities so that the impression is not that the United States is somehow moving back into Iraq, but rather that the United States is doing what's ultimately best for the Iraqi people, even as we join in fighting a common enemy.

I realize I probably should have had a translation break there. [*Laughter*] I feel bad for our translator. [*Laughter*] Why don't you go ahead, and then, maybe I'll add something right at the end.

And that's why Prime Minister Abadi's clear statement—both inside of Iraq and to the world community—that it is important for all fighting forces to be under unified control of the Iraqi Government is so important. And I think it's particularly significant that that view is shared among a wide range of political parties inside of Iraq and was echoed by Grand Ayatollah Sistani just recently. It sends a clear message that ultimately, Iraq is in control of its own destiny. And part of that means that those who possess arms and have the ability to apply force and defend their country have to be under a single Government.

As Prime Minister Abadi mentioned, that's particularly important in order to ensure that the Government is accountable for the actions of armed forces so that if there are criminal acts or sectarian retributions that are carried out, that ultimately, Prime Minister Abadi is able to call those forces to account and to control them, to make sure that you don't have a backlash as a consequence of the efforts to clear territory from ISIL's control.

So our coordination, I think, has consistently improved over time as Prime Minister Abadi has gained greater control over Iraqi security forces, as the training efforts and equipping efforts that we're engaged in continue to improve. Coordinating how our air power can support and expand into a more effective Iraqi security force deployment is going to continue to be critical. But none of this works unless there is a perception among all the parties involved—Shia, Sunni, Kurd, and others inside of Iraq—that this is an inclusive Government

that is listening to the voices of all the people and including them in decisionmaking. And the fact that Prime Minister Abadi is doing that makes our job and the coalition's job of coordination much easier.

Thank you very much. Okay.

[*At this point, Prime Minister Abadi spoke briefly in English as follows.*]

Prime Minister Abadi. Just one question. Just one. Just one question from Iraqi.

[*A reporter asked a question in Arabic.*]

President Obama. Why don't we have the question translated?

Iraq-U.S. Security Cooperation

Interpreter. She is asking questions about whether there will be support in the effort to liberate Al Anbar and Al Mosul.

Prime Minister Abadi. Certainly, part of the reason for this visit is to coordinate this important work. This will be the last step and to liberate the rest of the areas remaining under Daesh's control, especially in Mosul, which ISIL considers to be its base and its capital and the capital of the so-called Islamic caliphate. We have plans to liberate Al Anbar and Ninawa and, of course, we need high-level coordination for this effort. And we need support from the U.S. and the coalition forces and regional governments. And President Obama and the U.S. administration has—have expressed full readiness to provide support for our security forces in our effort to liberate all of Iraq.

[*A reporter spoke in English as follows.*]

Q. But would you give them additional weapons, Mr. President, like Apache helicopters and drones and F–16 that the Prime Minister has been asking for? At least, it's been reported as asking.

President Obama. I think this is why we are having this meeting to make sure that we are continually improving our coordination to make sure that Iraqi security forces are in a position to succeed in our common mission.

Okay? Thank you so much, everybody. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:55 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Grand Ayatollah Al-Sayyid Ali Al-Husseini Al-Sistani, Iraqi Shiite leader. Prime Minister Abadi and some reporters spoke in Arabic, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Joint Statement by President Obama and Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi of Iraq
April 14, 2015

President Obama welcomed Haider Al-Abadi, Prime Minister of the Republic of Iraq, and the accompanying delegation to Washington from April 13–16, 2015. The President and the Prime Minister met today at the White House to reaffirm the long-term U.S.-Iraq strategic partnership based on mutual respect and common interests and their shared commitment to the U.S.-Iraq Strategic Framework Agreement. The President expressed his strong support for the progress that the Prime Minister and the Iraqi government have accomplished since the two leaders last met seven months ago.

Working Together to Destroy ISIL

President Obama and Prime Minister Al-Abadi reviewed progress in the campaign to degrade and ultimately destroy ISIL. The two leaders honored the sacrifices of Iraqis from all communities in the fight against ISIL and expressed appreciation for the significant contributions of more than 60 partners in the global coalition to counter ISIL. Over 1,900 U.S. and

coalition strikes in Iraq have played a critical role in halting ISIL's advance and supporting the Iraqi Security Forces in liberating significant Iraqi territory once held by ISIL. The Prime Minister praised the performance of the Iraqi Security Forces, including the volunteer fighters in the Popular Mobilization Forces, the Peshmerga forces, and local tribal fighters. Prime Minister Al-Abadi thanked the President and the American people for the critical support provided to Iraq, including the important work of U.S. service men and women currently stationed in Iraq and the region, and both leaders reaffirmed the core security partnership between their two countries.

The President and Prime Minister discussed next steps in the campaign to counter ISIL. The Prime Minister stressed the importance of stabilizing areas liberated from ISIL control, and ensuring the full transfer of authority to local officials and local police; the maintenance of civil order; the protection of civilians; the peaceful return of displaced residents; and the restoration of government services and the economy. The Prime Minister emphasized that the Government of Iraq has zero tolerance for human rights abuses and requested assistance from the United States and the coalition to enable immediate and long-term stabilization in areas liberated from ISIL. The Prime Minister underscored the integral role that local populations are playing in liberating their own areas and, accordingly, stressed the importance of enrolling additional tribal fighters in the fight against ISIL as part of the Popular Mobilization Forces. President Obama pledged to continue to support Iraqi Security Forces and tribal engagement initiatives with U.S. training and equipment. He specifically welcomed the recent decision by the Iraqi government to supply thousands of rifles and other equipment to tribal fighters in eastern Anbar province, building on the successful model at Al Asad airbase in western Anbar, where U.S. advisors are enabling tribal operations against ISIL in coordination with Iraqi Security Forces.

The two leaders underscored the threat that terrorism poses to Iraq, the region, and the global community. Both leaders emphasized the importance of implementing of UNSC resolutions 2178 and 2199. They also discussed the critical importance of addressing the sources of extremism and violence, including additional combined efforts in these areas over the coming weeks, and the President noted that the Prime Minister would continue discussions on the military campaign against ISIL in his meetings with the Secretary of Defense on April 15, in addition to the coalition plenary meeting on the same day.

Strengthening a Unified and Democratic Iraq

Prime Minister Al-Abadi updated the President on political developments in Iraq, including his cabinet's efforts to implement the ambitious national program set forth upon the formation of the government. He noted parliament's passage of a national budget, Iraq's first in years with cross-sectarian support, with key provisions on oil exports and revenue sharing with the Kurdistan Regional Government. Prime Minister Al-Abadi affirmed his priority remains the passage of legislation that was outlined in the national program. The President welcomed the progress that has been made to date, and called on all political blocs to make the compromises necessary for full implementation of the national program.

More broadly, the Prime Minister outlined his vision of a more decentralized model of governance, as called for under the Constitution of Iraq, a model that he asserted was an essential element of the broader strategy for progress in Iraq. He detailed the government's program to devolve security and service delivery to the provincial and local levels. In this light, he noted efforts to empower local government in the stabilization of liberated areas. He also highlighted the importance of the National Guard in providing more authority over security to the residents of Iraq's provinces and to ensuring that Iraq's security forces are broadly representative and close to the communities they are sworn to protect and defend. The President expressed support for the strategy outlined by the Prime Minister and committed to provide all appropriate assistance and support, as called for in the Strategic Frame-

work Agreement, to strengthen Iraq's constitutional democracy.

Enhancing Opportunities for the Iraqi People

The President and the Prime Minister both noted that our two nations must continue to enhance broad bilateral cooperation under the Strategic Framework Agreement. The Prime Minister outlined the range of Iraq's challenges resulting from the global decline in the price of oil, the humanitarian crisis, and Iraq's fight against ISIL. Prime Minister Al-Abadi outlined his government's strategy to shore up the Iraqi economy, including revitalization of Iraq's energy infrastructure and reforms to mitigate corruption and reduce wasteful spending. The two leaders agreed that international support for Iraq's fight against ISIL could be leveraged toward enhancing Iraq's integration with the global economy.

President Obama noted that economic cooperation is central to the long-term U.S.-Iraq partnership. The President congratulated the Prime Minister on Iraq's recent record high oil exports, the highest in more than thirty years, and they affirmed that they will work together to expand Iraqi oil production and exports in the future. The President said he had directed Vice President Biden to convene, on April 16, a Higher Coordinating Committee meeting of the Strategic Framework Agreement to focus specifically on economic issues, including bilateral trade, energy cooperation, private sector reform, and Iraq's fiscal stability.

President Obama and Prime Minister Al-Abadi both reaffirmed the need to address the humanitarian situation in Iraq, where more than 2.6 million Iraqis have been internally displaced since January 2014. President Obama noted his recent decision to provide nearly $205 million dollars in additional humanitarian assistance to Iraqis in the region and to support Iraq's response to the Syrian crisis, bringing the U.S. contribution to help displaced Iraqis to more than $407 million since the start of fiscal year 2014.

Reinforcing Regional Cooperation

President Obama expressed his strong support for increased cooperation between Iraq and regional partners on the basis of mutual respect for sovereignty and non-interference in domestic affairs. The Prime Minister updated the President on his consultations with regional capitals and his efforts to enhance regional diplomatic representation in Baghdad. The President confirmed the importance of establishing a strong diplomatic presence in Baghdad by all regional Arab states.

The two leaders agreed that there are no military solutions to the region's conflicts. To this end, Prime Minister Al-Abadi welcomed the framework for a Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action between the P5+1 and Iran regarding Iran's nuclear program as a means towards greater peace and stability in the region. Both leaders affirmed that a strong U.S.-Iraq relationship was critical for regional security and in the long-term interests of both countries.

Conclusion

This visit provides an opportunity to review the important progress that Iraq and the United States have made together and to discuss ways to further enhance cooperation across the full spectrum of the strategic partnership. The rapid and extensive response by the United States to the current challenges facing Iraq has highlighted the robust and steadfast relationship between our two countries, and the President and the Prime Minister agreed on the importance of continuing to strengthen this enduring relationship.

NOTE: The joint statement referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization. An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Statement on the Department of Labor's Proposed Rule on Retirement Savings Advice

April 14, 2015

Today the Department of Labor took new action to protect the retirement savings of hard-working Americans, building on my administration's strong record of protecting consumers. Current loopholes allow Wall Street brokers and other financial advisers to benefit from backdoor payments and hidden fees if they talk responsible Americans into buying bad retirement investments—with high costs and low returns—instead of recommending quality investments. As I called for in February, today's proposal updates the rules to crack down on these conflicts of interest in retirement advice that are costing working and middle class families billions of dollars every year. A central goal of middle class economics is helping responsible American families retire with security and dignity after a lifetime of hard work, and today's action by the Department of Labor is an important step toward that goal.

Statement on Congressional Passage of the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act of 2015

April 14, 2015

I applaud the Members of Congress from both parties who came together to pass the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act.

Nearly every year for the past 13 years, physicians have faced the possibility of an arbitrary cut in their payments from Medicare unless Congress passed a so-called "doc fix." In my budget, I called for putting a permanent end to this annual manufactured crisis to ensure that doctors will not face a sudden drop in their pay. This bill is consistent with that proposal. It's a milestone for physicians and for the seniors and people with disabilities who rely on Medicare for their health care needs.

This bill also strengthens our country's health care system for the long term. It more directly rewards providers for better quality care. It creates incentives to encourage physicians to participate in new, innovative payment models that could further reduce the growth in Medicare spending while preserving access to care. And it extends the Children's Health Insurance Program, which has provided coverage to millions of American children.

This bipartisan bill will protect health coverage for millions of Americans, and I will be proud to sign it into law. I hope Congress builds on this good work by finding more ways to make sure every American has access to the quality, affordable health care they deserve.

NOTE: The statement referred to H.R. 2.

Certification of Rescission of Cuba's Designation as a State Sponsor of Terrorism

April 14, 2015

Pursuant to the Constitution and the laws of the United States, and consistent with section 6(j)(4)(B) of the Export Administration Act of 1979, Public Law 96–72, as amended (50 U.S.C. App. 2405(j)), and as continued in effect by Executive Order 13222 of August 17, 2001, I hereby certify, with respect to the rescission of the determination of March 1, 1982, regarding Cuba that:

> (i) the Government of Cuba has not provided any support for international terrorism during the preceding 6-month period; and

(ii) the Government of Cuba has provided assurances that it will not support acts of international terrorism in the future.

This certification shall also satisfy the provisions of section 620A(c)(2) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, Public Law 87–195, as amended (22 U.S.C. 2371(c)), and section 40(f)(1)(B) of the Arms Export Control Act, Public Law 90–629, as amended (22 U.S.C. 2780(f)).

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
April 14, 2015.

Message to the Congress Transmitting a Report on the Proposed Rescission of Cuba's Designation as a State Sponsor of Terrorism
April 14, 2015

To the Congress of the United States:

I transmit herewith a report to the Congress with respect to the proposed rescission of Cuba's designation as a state sponsor of terrorism.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
April 14, 2015.

Letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives Transmitting Budget Amendments for Fiscal Year 2016
April 14, 2015

Dear Mr. Speaker:

I ask the Congress to consider the enclosed Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 budget amendments for the Departments of Agriculture, Defense, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, the Interior, Justice, State, and Transportation, as well as the General Services Administration, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Small Business Administration, and the Social Security Administration. These amendments are fully offset and do not change the overall discretionary budget authority. These amendments are necessary to reflect correctly policies assumed in my FY 2016 Budget.

This transmittal also includes FY 2016 budget amendments for the Legislative Branch. As a matter of comity and tradition, these appropriations requests for the Legislative Branch are transmitted without change. These amendments decrease by $2.7 million the overall discretionary budget authority in my FY 2016 Budget.

In addition, the Inspector General for the Environmental Protection Agency has concluded that the Budget's request for the Office of Inspector General "would substantially inhibit the Inspector General from performing the duties of the office" under section 6(f)(3)(E) of the Inspector General Act of 1978 (the "Act"). These comments were included in the Agency's congressional justification materials, but were not received in time to be included in my FY 2016 Budget document. This letter constitutes transmittal of the concern pursuant to the Act.

The details of these amendments are set forth in the enclosure from the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

Remarks at PBS's "The History of Gospel: In Performance at the White House"
April 14, 2015

The President. Thank you so much. Everybody, have a seat.

[*At this point, the President sang briefly as follows.*]

The President. Well—[*laughter*].

[*The President then made remarks as follows.*]

The President. I hope everybody is in the spirit tonight. Bringing some church—[*laughter*]—to the White House.

Good evening, everybody.

Audience members. Good evening.

The President. Tonight we continue one of my favorite traditions here at the White House by celebrating the music that has helped to shape our Nation. And over the years, we've had the quintessential sounds of America fill this room, from jazz to Motown to blues to country. So it is fitting that tonight we honor the music that influenced all those genres, gospel.

I want to start by thanking tonight's amazing performers: Shirley Caesar, Darlene Love, Rhiannon Giddens, Rance Allen, Emmylou Harris, Rodney Crowell, Tamela Mann, Lyle Lovett, and the Morgan State University Choir. And I also want to thank tonight's emcee, Robin Roberts, who we love.

Now, I've got to say, you're having a pretty good night when T Bone Burnett and the Queen of Soul herself, Aretha Franklin, show up at your house to jam. So we've got royalty here tonight. It's a state visit tonight. [*Laughter*]

We don't know everything about the origins of gospel, but we do know that this music is rooted in the spirituals sung by the slaves, which W.E.B. Du Bois called "the most beautiful expression of human experience born this side of the seas."

Even though they were often forbidden to read or write or even speak freely, slaves were permitted to sing. Songs were where their dreams took flight, where they expressed faith and love, as well as pain and fear and unimaginable loss. Songs were also how they conveyed information: the locations of safe houses for runaway slaves or directions for a path towards freedom, buried in the coded language of divine lyrics. They sang songs of liberation, if not for their bodies in this world, then for their souls in the next.

And over time, those spirituals blended with hymns and sacred songs to become the music of the Black church. In the decades after the Civil War, as free men and women streamed north in record numbers searching for a new life, they brought those tunes with them.

But the gospel music we know today really started in the 1930s, when jazz musician Thomas A. Dorsey combined the sounds of the church he grew up in with the jazz and blues that he loved. By the 1960s, gospel music had become central to the civil rights movement, not just through the political activism of legends like Mahalia Jackson and the Staple Singers, but through the songs themselves, from hymns like "Take My Hand, Precious Lord," a favorite of Dr. King's, to the anthem of the movement, "We Shall Overcome."

Gospel music has evolved over time, but its heart stays true. It still has an unmatched power to strike the deepest chord in all of us, touching people of all faiths and of no faith. As Mahalia Jackson herself once said, "Blues are the song of despair, but gospel songs are the songs of hope." Hope that we might rise above our failures and disappointments. Hope that we might receive His redemption. Hope that, in lifting our voices together, we too might one day reach the Promised Land.

So tonight we will hear from musicians who helped to shape this singular American art form and musicians who are taking gospel to great new heights.

And to get us started, I'd like to introduce an extraordinary singer, a woman who reaches millions with her music and preaches to her

flock from her North Carolina pulpit every Sunday. Please give it up for Reverend, Doctor, Pastor Shirley Caesar.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:42 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Shirley A. Caesar-Williams, pastor, Mt. Calvary Word of Faith Church in Raleigh, NC; Robin Roberts, anchor, ABC News's "Good Morning America" program; and musicians Mavis and Yvonne Staples.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia, President Ernest Bai Koroma of Sierra Leone, and President Alpha Condé of Guinea

April 15, 2015

Well, I want to welcome Presidents Sirleaf, Koroma, and Condé. The United States has a long partnership with Liberia and Sierra Leone and Guinea, partnerships that proved to be critical in the fight against Ebola. We're here to assess progress today and to look ahead.

We begin by noting the incredible losses that took place in all three countries. More than 10,000 people have died from Ebola: men, women, and children. On behalf of the American people, we want to express our deepest condolences to the families and recognize how challenging this has been for all the countries involved.

Under extraordinary circumstances, the people of these three countries have shown great courage and resolve, treating and taking care of each other, especially children and orphans. The United States has been proud to lead an international effort to work with these three countries in a global response.

Last week, there were fewer than 40 new cases, so we've seen major progress. In Liberia right now, there are zero cases. In Sierra Leone and Guinea combined, there were fewer than 40 new cases last week, and that's around the lowest number in a year. Now we're focused on a shared goal, and that is getting to zero. We can't be complacent. This virus is unpredictable.

We have to be vigilant, and the international community has to remain fully engaged in a partnership with these three countries until there are no cases of Ebola in these countries. Health systems also have to be rebuilt to meet daily needs: vaccines for measles, delivering babies safely, treating HIV/AIDS and malaria. And with our Global Health Security Agenda, we intend to do more to prevent future epidemics.

So the Ebola epidemic has been also an economic crisis. That's part of the reason why these three Presidents are here. They're going to be meeting with a number of the multilateral institutions—the IMF and World Bank—here in Washington. There's the challenge of restoring markets and agricultural growth, promoting investment and development. So I'm going to be looking forward to hearing from them, how the United States can stand shoulder to shoulder with them to work hard to take this crisis and turn it into an opportunity to rebuild even stronger than before: to strengthen administrative systems, public health systems; to continue the work that they've done in rooting out corruption, reinforcing democratic institutions—all of which will be the foundation stones for long-term progress and prosperity.

So, Madam President, Mr. Presidents, we are very grateful for the hard work that you've done. We're proud to partner with you, and we intend to see this through until the job is done.

All right? Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:45 a.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House.

Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session at a SheKnows Media/BlogHer Town Hall Meeting on Working Families in Charlotte, North Carolina
April 15, 2015

The President. Hello, everybody! Thank you! Everybody, please have a seat. Thank you so much. Well, this is fun. [*Laughter*] I was just hanging out with the Cat in the Hat that's in the back there. [*Laughter*] Hello, everybody.

Audience member. Hello!

The President. Hello! [*Laughter*] Let me start by acknowledging two of North Carolina's champions in Congress who flew down with me. Alma Adams is here. Give her a big round of applause. There she is. And David Price—where's David? And your own outstanding mayor, Dan Clodfelter, is here. Where's Dan? Right—[*applause*].

I want to thank Dianna for the introduction. I'm actually here because Dianna sent me a letter, and I wanted to reply in person. [*Laughter*] And I want to thank Lisa and everybody who helped put this together.

Let me just read an excerpt of what Dianna wrote me: "As part of the middle class, I know how it feels to work hard every day and, even with a college education and a full-time job, find it harder and harder to make ends meet." Now, I think it's fair to say that what Dianna said is true for so many people here in North Carolina and all across the country.

It's the kind of letter that I would get all the time from folks who ask for one thing: that in America, their hard work and their sense of responsibility is rewarded with the chance to get ahead. And I know it's on the minds of working moms every day.

[*At this point, a baby cried.*]

The President. Yes it is, and you too. [*Laughter*]

[*The baby cried again.*]

The President. There, yes, I know. [*Laughter*]

And because a lot of working moms use BlogHer and SheKnows to talk about these issues, we've decided to partner with them for this town hall. So I'm going to keep my remarks brief at the front end so we can spend most of the time having a conversation.

Now, thanks in part to some of the decisions that we made early on in the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression—right when I came into office—we've made real progress. Our businesses have created more than 12 million new jobs over the past 5 years. The unemployment rate has fallen from 10 percent right when I was coming into office to 5.5 percent.

More kids are graduating from high school. More kids are attending college. More people are able to save more money at the pump because our energy production has gone up. Our clean energy production has gone up. More Americans know the security of health care because of this thing called the Affordable Care Act, a.k.a. Obamacare.

And so the recovery reaches more Americans every single day. And the question we now face is, are we going to accept an economy in which, going forward, just a few folks are doing exceptionally well, or are we going to have an economy where everybody who's willing to work hard is able to get ahead?

And that's what I've been calling middle class economics. The idea that in this country, we do best when everybody is getting a fair shot and everybody is doing their fair share and everybody is playing by the same set of rules. And that's what has driven my policies ever since I became President. A lot of my policies have been specifically focused on working moms, because I believe that when women succeed here in America, then the whole country succeeds. I'm a firm believer in that.

Now, part of middle class economics means helping working families feel more economically secure in this global, technologically driven, constantly changing economy. Which is why my budget puts forward proposals to lower the taxes for working families who are trying to pay for things like childcare and college and retirement.

In today's economy, having both parents in the workforce is an economic reality for many families. But in 31 States, including North Carolina, high-quality childcare costs are higher than a year of tuition at a State university. Average cost here in North Carolina, $16,000 for childcare. And that's why my plan would make it much more affordable for every working and middle class family with young children.

In today's economy, higher education has never been more important or more expensive. And that's why I want to bring down the cost of community college for responsible students—all the way down to zero—so that they know that if they are doing well in high school, they can get that higher education they need for a job.

In today's economy, women still hold most of the low-paying jobs, jobs that often demand the hardest work. And that's why we've successfully worked with States and cities and companies to raise their workers' wages without having to wait for Congress, which, although Alma and David Price are on board on this, for some reason we've got a whole bunch of Members of Congress who don't get it when it comes to raising wages. And I know there are workers here in Charlotte and across the country that are organizing for higher wages. It's time that we stood alongside them and made it happen. America deserves a raise.

Now, it is significant that today is tax day. [*Laughter*] If you haven't filed, you—[*laughter*]. But the reason I mentioned all the policies that I just talked about is that overall, when you put my policies together in the budget, I want to cut taxes for more than 5 million middle class families who need help paying for childcare. I want to cut taxes for more than 8 million families of students who need help paying for college. I want to cut taxes to help 30 million workers save for retirement. I want to cut taxes for 13 million low-wage workers the same way that I've fought to expand tax cuts like the child tax credit and the earned income tax credit, and we've been able to implement those.

So all told, my plan would cut taxes for 44 million working and middle class families. And that's who our Tax Code should benefit: working Americans who are out there struggling every day, doing the right thing, supporting their families, and trying to get a leg up in this new economy.

Now, it is a good thing that Republicans in Washington have started to talk about wages and incomes and the middle class. It's better late than never—[*laughter*]—and so I'm encouraged. Unfortunately, the policies they're putting forward don't answer the mail; they don't speak to the issues that ordinary families are facing.

So I'll just give you a couple examples. Their tax plan would give the average millionaire and billionaire a $50,000 tax cut. That's about what the average middle class worker makes in an entire year. They're also pushing a new $270 billion tax cut for the very wealthiest of the wealthiest. It would affect about 5,000 families—[*laughter*]—all across America; it would cost $270 billion. Here in North Carolina, it would benefit precisely 120 households.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. For $270 billion, which is the cost approximately of the tax breaks I'm giving to 44 million people, it would benefit a little over 5,000 people.

So their plan would cut taxes for the top one-tenth of 1 percent and let taxes go up on 25 million working families and students. And my view is, we don't need tax cuts for millionaires and billionaires. I don't need a tax cut. We're already doing well. We've been blessed by this country and the opportunities it offers, and now what we have to focus on is making sure everybody has opportunity and making sure middle class families have tax cuts and a young family that just had their first child and are still struggling to get by, that they get a little bit of relief, a little bit of a break. Those are the folks who need help. That's what middle class economics is all about, and that's what I'm going to be fighting for.

But I'm going to stop talking because I promised I would be short. [*Laughter*] And one of the things that I'm going to want to do is not just do the talking but I also want to do some listening. And what I'm really interested

in is hearing from all of you about what are you facing in your lives. How do you think government policy would be helpful? What do you think folks in Congress, the President, mayors, Governors, what do you think would actually make a difference in the lives of middle class families? And because we've got some powerful, hard-working women around here, I also want to specifically hear from the women in terms of what you think would make a difference as well. All right?

So with that, let me—I'm going to take my seat right here. [*Laughter*]

Wage Equality

BlogHer Cofounder and SheKnows Chief Community Officer Lisa Stone. Thank you, Mr. President. I think this is on. I'm going to be selfish and kick off with the first question. But then, we are going to hand over a few questions to you all. And when the time comes for you, just raise your hand and a mike wrangler will magically appear and hold it for you.

I'd like to cover off on something that happened yesterday: Equal Pay Day in the United States. The Paycheck Fairness Act has failed, I believe, now four times in Congress. I know you've been a proponent of it. I heard from a user of sheknows.com yesterday, Lily Onate. She works 1½ jobs to be the single supporter of her son. She's making just enough that she cannot afford to get sick, but she also cannot achieve certain benefits. She's trying to save for college. And more than anything, she is very disappointed to learn she is making less than men 10 years younger than she is on the job. Women make 78 cents on the dollar unless they're women of color, in which they make significantly less.

Why is the Paycheck Fairness Act failing? And does someone dispute the existence of the pay difference?

The President. The reason we haven't gotten it done is because Republicans in Congress have blocked it. And some of them do dispute that it's a problem. I mean, many say it's a woman's choice that is resulting in women getting paid less than men: lifestyle decisions; and they'd rather stay at home; or they'd rather work part time; or what have you.

Now, understand that the whole point of equal pay is people doing the same job and getting paid less. That's the problem. The Paycheck Fairness Act would say not that women should get paid more or the same if they're doing less work, it's saying they should get paid the same for doing the same work.

Now, this should be a no-brainer. There are some things that are conceptually complicated. [*Laughter*] There are other things that are pretty simple. If you've got two people doing the same job, they should get paid the same.

And this is personal for me, because I think a lot of people are aware, I was raised by a single mom who worked, went to school, got her advanced degree, and helped raise me and my sister. And we also got help from my grandparents, and actually, the main breadwinner in our entire family was my grandmother. And she's a great story. Grew up in a—in Kansas. My grandfather went to fight in World War II in Europe. When he came back, he got benefits of the GI bill, but she was Rosie the Riveter. She was working back home on an assembly line. And she didn't get, unfortunately, benefits the way we set up the post-9/11 GI bill, where spouses and family members can get help as well.

So she never got a college education. But she was smarter than my grandfather. I apologize, Gramps—[*laughter*]—but I think everybody who knew her understood that. She got a job as a secretary, worked her way up, became the vice president of a bank, but then hit the glass ceiling and, for the next 20 years, kept on training younger men who came up and would end up going ahead of her, including the presidents of the banks.

And that was pretty typical at that time. The question is, why is it still typical now? I've got two daughters. I expect them to be treated the same as somebody else's sons when it comes to their opportunities on the job.

So what we did when I came into office, we passed something called the Lilly Ledbetter Act, named after a good friend of mine, Lilly Ledbetter, who had worked for years and

found out long into her work that she had been getting paid all these years less than men, substantially. She brought suit. They said, well, it's too late to file suit because you should have filed suit right when it started happening. She said, I just found out. And they said, it doesn't matter. [*Laughter*] So we changed that law to allow somebody like Lilly, when they find out, to finally be able to go ahead and file suit.

What we also did then is, I signed what's called an Executive order that said if you want to be a Federal contractor with us, then you've got to allow your employees to share compensation data. Because a lot of companies discourage or even penalize employees for telling each other what they're getting paid, in part because they don't want everybody finding out that maybe the men are getting paid more than the women for doing the same job. So we said, you want to work for the Federal Government, you can't do that.

But we still need to get this Paycheck Fairness Act passed. And it really is just a matter of convincing a number of Republicans to recognize that they've got daughters too, they've got spouses, and at a time when the majority of families have both spouses working, or if you've got a single parent—that's most likely to be a single mom—working, this is an economic issue. It's a family issue. It's not just a women's issue. Families are going to be better off.

Let me tell you, now, Michelle would point out, First Ladies get paid nothing. [*Laughter*] So there's clearly not equal pay in the White House when it comes to her and me. But before we were in the White House, I wanted to make sure Michelle got paid as much as she could. [*Laughter*] I want a big check—paycheck for Michelle. [*Laughter*] That wasn't a women's issue. If she had a bigger paycheck, that made us able to pay the bills. Why would I want my spouse or my daughter discriminated against? That doesn't make any sense.

So this should be a no-brainer. And hopefully, we'll—we're just going to keep on pushing until the light bulb goes off on— above the heads of some of these Republican friends of mine.

Ms. Stone. Well, I'd like to see some hands from people in the audience who are interested in asking a question.

The President. Go ahead.

Ms. Stone. Please stand up. Yes.

Q. Hi, Mr. President.

The President. I think we can hear you.

Q. Okay.

The President. Are you guys hearing that back here? No? Uh-oh. [*Laughter*] Testing, one, two, three.

Ms. Stone. Why don't we work on that mike, and we'll——

The President. Well, hold on a second. No, I mean, she—this stretches. [*Laughter*] I'll be like Phil Donahue. [*Laughter*]

Education Funding/Teachers

Q. Hi, Mr. President. I'm Erin Odom from Worzel, North Carolina, and thehumbledhomemaker.com. It's an honor to meet you. My question is—first of all, I believe that the key to economic growth and the key to ending the cycle of poverty is education, which I think you would agree. My question is: What can the Government do on a Federal level to increase the wages of our teachers, which is traditionally and stereotypically a female profession?

Now, I'll tell you, my husband is a public school teacher. I'm a blogger. Through our business—we call it our business because he helps me—we make significantly more money on a mommy blog than he makes as a public school teacher. For 3 years, we were on Government aid, and I'm thankful we had that so that we could survive through our WIC checks, through Medicaid. But there are teachers that are leaving the professions—good teachers—because they can't afford to feed their families. And I want the children in our country to have a good education. And females—my husband is a male, but females that are single women supporting their families on a teacher's salary, they can't do it. So I know it's a State thing, but what can the Federal Government do to put pressure on the States to increase teacher income?

The President. Well, first of all, do you guys have kids?

Q. Yes, sir. We have three daughters—2, 4, and 6.

The President. Oh, you're busy—[*laughter*]—2, 4, and 6. Do you bring them here to the—this is pretty nice. I was saying it before I came out here, I loved those days when Malia and Sasha were that age, and I could come hang out at these places. Plus, you could go to all the movies like "Monsters, Inc." and stuff—[*laughter*]. And I love those movies—"Toy Story." And people didn't think you were weird watching them because you had two little kids. [*Laughter*]

Your point about teachers is absolutely right. And you're also right that, historically, this has been a State issue. Schools are generally funded through the State and typically through property taxes. And the Federal Government's total education budget accounts for about 7 percent of total education spending.

And one of the things that we think is really important is making sure that the Federal Government, in providing assistance to school districts, encourages States to do their fair share as well. And in fact, there was a debate that was taking place because the House Republicans were talking about changing the formula where Federal State aid was provided so that it would be okay to take Federal aid and then reduce the amount of State dollars that were going to education and pay for tax cuts for somebody else, and then teachers would be no better off.

But I'll be honest with you, the primary way that we can have an impact at the Federal level is to point out States that are doing better and States that are doing worse and to talk about the importance of teachers in our economic growth and our society.

My sister was a teacher, and so I know how little she got paid. It's hard to support a family. And there are a lot of young people who are really talented who want to go into teaching. In places like Korea and Finland, where the education system is really doing well, teachers are paid at the level that doctors and engineers are paid, and it is respected as a profession.

So frankly, we've just got to put more pressure on States, because there aren't that many levers that we have in order to encourage States to change their pay structure.

Now, I'm just going to editorialize a little bit. Here in North Carolina, this used to be the State in which the promise of education was understood at the State government level, and the reason North Carolina did better economically than many of the other Mid-Atlantic and Southern States was because of the Research Triangle and the emphasis on education, and my good friend Jim Hunt, the Governor, who used to place such a big emphasis on it.

Funding now here in the State and teacher pay is ranking as low as it gets. And so part of it is just pointing that out and, hopefully, understanding, this shouldn't be a partisan issue. It shouldn't matter whether you're a Republican or Democrat; you should want to make sure that schools are successful. And that requires teachers that are motivated, have professional training, but are also making enough of a living that they can afford a middle class lifestyle.

Early Childhood Education

Ms. Stone. Picking up on that, Erin mentioned that she has 2-, 4-, and 6-year-olds. We surveyed 57 different moms here in the North Carolina—Charlotte Greater Area. And their primary concern was family-friendly policies. They feel that they are particularly struggling with early childhood. We had a question online from @FeministaJones, who said, the U.S. is behind; other countries have been successful in developing paid maternity leave, in some cases, paternity leave. We are not investing in the first 5 years of childhood to the same tune as some of our international economic competitors. What is the solution for that?

The President. The solution is for us to expand access to early childhood education.

Here's what we know. We know this is the smartest investment we can make as a society. Every dollar we put in—into high-quality early childhood education, we get $7 back in reduced teen pregnancy, improved graduation rates, improved performance in school, reduced incarceration rates. The society as a whole does better.

And this is not just a problem for the poorest of the poor, although that obviously is a very important factor, because you've got a lot of single moms out there. If we want to get them into the workforce, they've got to feel like there's some reliable childcare. But we also want to make that childcare high quality so that those kids now start having ladders of opportunity that are available to them. But it's also—this is a middle class—this is an American issue.

Look, when Michelle and I, when our daughters were 5, 6, or younger, one of the biggest challenges we had was finding good childcare and being able to afford childcare. At a time when we were still paying off debts from our student loans, we're trying to buy a house for the first time, juggling all those things was tough. And we were making a lot more money than a lot of people do. So I know if it was hard for us, I can only imagine what it's like for somebody who's making $40,000, $50,000 a year, or less.

And the good news is that at the State level, we've actually seen some recognition of this issue. I'm really encouraged by the fact that it's not just the traditional States you'd expect, but also a lot of so-called red States where the Governors, Republican Governors, have said, you know what, this is important. Oklahoma has got outstanding early childhood initiatives going.

[*The President sneezed.*]

The President. Excuse me.

Ms. Stone. Bless you.

The President. Thank you. I was fighting that one for a while.

Georgia is doing some excellent work around early childhood. So what we've been doing is actually providing some early childhood education grants through the Department of Education to try to help put together public-private partnerships, to get State and Federal money so that we can develop models of outstanding early childhood education and show what a difference it can make. And it can make a huge difference in terms of long-term performance.

We know, for example, that a very poor child, when they show up at kindergarten, they're already behind millions of words. They've just heard so much less vocabulary that there's a gap that needs to be closed. But we also know that if there's a high-quality early childhood education program, particularly ones that are working with the parents, then even a parent who didn't graduate from high school, if they're talking to their child, and they're getting support, and the child is at a high-quality early childhood level, that gap can close pretty quickly. Because kids are resilient, and they'll soak up like a sponge what they're getting.

So we're—what we're trying to do is put together coalitions at the State levels and city levels, and our hope is, is that by showing that this can work in a variety of places, that eventually, Congress catches up and recognizes, this is a competitive issue for us globally as well.

In France, the early childhood programs are so good that everybody, the wealthiest as well as the poorest, all send their kids to these early childhood education programs. And the teachers there aren't just babysitters; they are professionally trained in early childhood development. And it really pays off. It's a great way for us to make sure every child gets opportunity in this country and to relieve some pressure from parents who have to work.

Ms. Stone. Thank you.

Other questions? I want to make sure we're—yes, ma'am. In the red.

The President. Hold on. Let's get a mike so we can hear you.

Childcare Tax Credit/Federal Budget Deficit/Tax Reform

Q. Hi, my name is Collette Forest, and I'm a single parent here in Charlotte, North Carolina. I used to receive a childcare voucher, so I know how important it is. But when the republicanly controlled legislature took over, we lost it. And a lot of fellow sisters that are with me, we had to make choices whether or not to pay for before-school care or afterschool care, because we had to work and we needed it. How can you help us?

The President. Well, now, this was not a plant, but it so happens—[*laughter*]—that we're actually proposing as part of my budget package to triple the child credit, which would translate to potentially an additional $900 a year for childcare. And that's going to make a big difference in a lot of families.

So at the Federal level at least, this should be one of our top budget priorities. And it is in everybody's interest to make sure that our kids—and I say "our" because the one thing I really believe is that even if you're single, even if your kids are grown, even if your kids are like mine, on their way to college soon and think I'm boring and don't want to hang out with me as much as they used to—[*laughter*]—that your kid is important to me too. And that's not out of charity, that's because your child—is it a son or a daughter?

Q. Eight-year-old son.

The President. An 8-year-old son. Your son, if he is doing well, that means he is paying taxes. That means he is contributing to society, he's staying out of trouble. That's a good investment for me. So we want to make sure that those families who are working hard, doing the right thing, that they get some tax relief. And we can afford this. The one thing I want to emphasize—because sometimes, when we talk about things like early childhood, people say, well, that'd be nice, but we can't afford it. Well, the truth is, is if we closed a few corporate tax loopholes that are not contributing to the economy right now, then we could afford it without increasing the deficit.

And I want to make this point, even though it's a little off topic, but it oftentimes is the backdrop against which these debates take place. If you listen to some of my political critics, they always want to paint me or the Democratic Party as this "tax and spend" and irresponsible. Let me say this: Since I came into office, the Federal deficit has come down by two-thirds. It hasn't gone up. It's come down by two-thirds. So when Bill Clinton was President, budget got balanced, and we had low deficits. Then, somebody else came in and—[*laughter*]—deficits started going up. And then, I came in, and I inherited this huge recession that drove up the deficits. And then, we started whittling them down, even as we were expanding the earned-income tax credit, even as we were expanding Pell grants. Because part of what we did was we said, well, let's make sure the Tax Code is fair. Let's make sure that we're eliminating programs that don't work to help middle class families.

There are ways to afford in our budget what needs to be done to help middle class families without blowing up the deficit. But it does require us making up—some choices, which is why when I hear a proposal from the House Republicans to reduce what we call the trust fund loophole so that the top one-tenth of 1 percent are getting a tax break—literally, fewer than 6,000 families benefit from this, because right now the way it works is you don't even pay this tax until you already have $5.5 million or $11 million for a couple. And we're going to give those folks a tax break for $270 billion. And all that money we could be spending, we could provide tax credits for childcare or for high—kids wanting to go to college. It—you've got to have some priorities here.

It turns out that as President, you end up knowing a lot of people, including a lot of rich people. Some of them are big supporters of mine, good friends of mine. Warren Buffett is a great friend of mine. Warren Buffett doesn't need a tax break. [*Laughter*] He really doesn't. He has too much money to spend. He can't spend it all. Even with all the money he's giving way, he still can't spend it all. So why would we be giving him a tax break when there are a whole bunch of families who need help?

And this is something that we really have to focus on. And as I said, it shouldn't even be a partisan issue. It's just a matter of common sense and fairness.

Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) Education/Women in the Technology Industry/Minimum Wage/Paid Sick Leave

Ms. Stone. Mr. President, you were just talking about some of the Nation's leading wealthy and also a little bit of corporate responsibility. I want to ask you about the private enterprise and their role.

I am visiting beautiful North Carolina today from Silicon Valley, where for the past year, unfortunately, it seems the Valley has become a poster child for the challenges women are having penetrating the leadership of some of our best technology companies. Women are lacking in venture capital firms. We're not running as many companies. We're not in the leadership pipeline. We're not in the engineering product groups in the same number. In fact, we are not getting as many STEM-related majors as we used to.

So when I think about some of the responsibilities you're saying the Government has, I would ask you what is the economic risk, either in Silicon Valley or here in the entire American economy, competitively, to having fewer women empowered in both leadership positions at home and in corporate America? What are we giving up in the economy? Product benefits? Insight?

The President. Well, let me use a sports analogy since I'm in North Carolina. There's some pretty good basketball here in North Carolina.

Ms. Stone. And perhaps, sir, I'm off base.

The President. No—oh, did everybody catch that—off base? [*Laughter*] You guys—[*laughter*]. You wouldn't field a team with just half the players, right? You wouldn't go in the game and the other side has got 12 players and you decide, well, we'll just have 6. You'd want all the team, the entire team, to be available for you to win. And the same is true for the country.

I mean, you mentioned, for example, engineers. We have a shortage of engineers in this country. We need more. But the fact of the matter is, is that because of how we structure STEM education—that's science, technology, engineering, and math—the way we structure it, oftentimes, girls get discouraged early from going into those fields. And we know, actually, from experiments and data and what happens in the classroom, that some of it's just making little changes in terms of how things are taught so that girls feel more empowered and more engaged in those fields. They've got just as much talent as the boys do.

And that, unfortunately, is still true in a lot of our economy. There are certain things that we don't encourage our daughters to do. They start making choices because they don't see representation of themselves in certain fields.

Really interesting story: Somebody—my Chief Technology Officer, Megan Smith, who came over from Google, she told me that when "CSI" came on—now, I've got to admit, I don't watch that very often. I mean, I just don't watch—no offense to "CSI"—I just don't see it. It seems like a really popular show. But apparently, there was a woman—or women—who were involved in forensics in the show. A lot of the show is about finding hair fiber or something, and then you solve a big crime. And once this show came on, the number of young women going into the field skyrocketed. Because all it took was girls saying, oh, I didn't know I could be that. I didn't know I could do that.

So we as a society have to do better: public sector, private sector. We're putting a lot of emphasis on STEM education specifically for girls. The same is true, by the way, for underrepresented minority groups. African Americans, Latinos are underrepresented in these fields, and we've got to—and now, that requires us, collectively—parents, community, churches, others—encouraging people into these fields. Because these are the fields where we're going to be growing.

But some of it also has to do with companies have to want to make it happen. They've got to be intentional about it. They've got to pay attention to it. And those companies that pay attention to it end up succeeding in recruiting more women, promoting more women, and those companies end up being more successful.

And I'm trying to set an example in the White House right now. The highest level of adviser I have on the White House staff is called an Assistant to the President, and we actually have more women than men right now, I think 13 to 11. But that wasn't always the case, because when I first came in, we had to say, you know what, we've got to do better, and

how do we make sure that we're promoting talent.

And it's true that companies can make a big difference. I'm going to give one example—two examples of how companies can make a difference, slightly different issue, but it shows the power companies have. When we started this minimum wage campaign, one of the places I went to was Costco, because not only did they pay their workers minimum wage, they paid them a living wage, and they provided them health care benefits. And they were a hugely profitable company, and we wanted to show that could be done. And then, suddenly, you had other companies like Gap announce that they were going to raise wages on their employees. And then, most recently, Walmart came in. And once Walmart is paying people more, then you know that something is happening, right? [*Laughter*]

So you can change attitudes and culture through a corporate example. On—one of the issues that's important to a lot of families is the issue of paid leave. There are 40-plus-million Americans who are working and don't have sick leave. They don't have sick leave. They get sick, there's nothing they can do. Either they go to work sick, or they lose their job, potentially, or at least they lose a paycheck. And family leave is still unpaid, so a lot of women can't take advantage of it if their child is sick at home.

Well, recently, Microsoft just announced that not only does it make sure that it has strong sick leave and paid leave, but it's actually only going to do business with contractors that do the same thing. So a big company like Microsoft then can start influencing some of their subcontractors and suppliers down the chain. That can end up having a huge impact.

So for companies that are brand names and set the standard, for them to show we're doing more to recruit women, promote women, put them in positions of authority, that sends a signal to our daughters, but it also sends a signal to other companies that it's the right thing to do.

Small Businesses

Ms. Stone. Thank you, Mr. President. A number of the women and men here are small-business owners. And it would be very interesting to hear your thoughts on how we could encourage those businesses, how those businesses could get some of the support that doesn't exist.

So if there are, it sounds like, Federal policies from which a Microsoft and a Costco can benefit from, showing good faith towards its employees—I'm assuming I'm right, they benefited from creating those programs—what Small Business Administration–level programs are available to small-business men and women who actually don't have a safety net, don't have an HR department, and don't have an ability to call on a larger power?

The President. Well, it's important—the examples I used in terms of raising the minimum wage and in terms of paid sick leave, they didn't get a Federal benefit. They just thought it was smart business sense. Because what happens is, you get a lower turnover, higher productivity from your employees, greater employee satisfaction, and the company just ends up doing better.

For small businesses, sometimes, that's tougher. You've got smaller margins. You're trying to figure out how do I keep the doors open, how do I pay the bills. And really, our focus when it comes to small business has been to make sure, number one, that the Small Business Administration, the SBA, that people are taking advantage of it.

Because there are a lot of programs focused—the biggest problem a lot of small businesses have is in financing. And when I first came into office, small businesses were the ones that were getting hit the worst by the great recession. So we actually eliminated fees and made it easier for small businesses to get loans, and that helped a whole lot of small businesses get back on their feet. And we're continuing to try to expand outreach to let small businesses know how they can take advantage of financing through the SBA and to try to reduce the paperwork and the hassle

that's involved in taking out a loan. That's hugely important.

We're also focusing specifically on women-owned businesses and how we can make sure that they are networked and able to access financing.

And then the Federal Government is a huge purchaser. We're just a big—we're the biggest customer in the world. We buy a lot of stuff. We buy everything. There's all kinds of stuff. At the Pentagon alone—[*laughter*]—I mean, you just think about, the Pentagon annual budget is well over $500 billion. It's the largest organization on Earth, and that means it's got some purchasing power.

So part of what we've been doing is working with our—the heads of our agencies, saying, you've got to do more to make sure that opportunities are opened up. And a lot of times it's as simple as, for example, breaking up contracts so that they're in bite-sized pieces so that small businesses can take advantage of them. Because a lot of times, traditionally, what's happened is, they'll put out a contract for pencils, and it will be, like, 40 million pencils. And a small business can't bid on 40 million pencils, but if you say, well, why don't we chop this up so that small businesses can actually bid on it, that ends up making a big difference.

And through these—through the use of our purchasing power, our market power, we're trying to also encourage more women-owned businesses and minority-owned businesses to be able to just get their foot in the door and show what they can do.

Keep in mind, every big business started as a small business, right? And we want to make sure that we're continuing to innovate in our economy. That's how, ultimately, jobs get created.

Ms. Stone. Thank you, sir. Other questions?

Other questions? Yes, ma'am, in the red hat. Please.

Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act/Workplace Flexibility

Q. Hi, Mr. President. My name is Jonette Harper, and I am the cofounder of Sarcoidosis of North Carolina. And I'm pretty sure you are familiar with sarcoidosis. There are a lot of people in our group, including myself, who started out life young, who thought everything was going to go their way.

The President. First of all, you're still young. But I just wanted to—[*laughter*].

Q. Thank you.

The President. All right. You sound like, geez—[*laughter*].

Q. No, I'm a proud 47-year-old woman.

The President. ——the world has passed you by.

Q. Thank you very much. But there's a lot of other people in the group who had their lives ahead of them, wanted to do big things, and they got sick. Now, along with other diseases like—sarcoidosis is an invisible, chronic illness. A lot of companies can't tell by looking at someone when they're sick. So a lot of mothers, as well as fathers—because men get sarcoidosis also—but a lot of them are put aside or given jobs that they know that they can't—which they're forced out of the workforce. My question to you is, is there any, or will there be, any opportunity to give companies either tax credits or something that will encourage them to hire people with—who are on disability who—their families break up, their children worry about college because mom can't keep a job because she's always sick. Is there—can there be a way to encourage companies to—even though people may only be able to work 20 minutes—or 20 hours a week, excuse me, 20 hours a week, that might be the best 20 hours that that company gets.

The President. Well, first of all, let me just say that this is an example of why I've always felt like health care can't be a privilege, it's got to be a right in this country. And this is why we passed the Affordable Care Act, to make sure that we start building a health care system instead of a disease care system, that we start focusing on prevention, that we empower people to take care of their health better, get regular checkups, mammograms, all the things that we know can contribute to long-term health. And I'm very proud of the millions of people who are being helped. And it's working.

For all the criticism and all the political ups and downs and all the—me getting beat up about it, the fact of the matter is, is you've got more than 16 million people who got health insurance who didn't have it before. You've got health insurance—uninsured rates have gone down drastically. And by the way, the cost has been lower than anybody projected. Health care inflation has gone up at its slowest rate in 50 years. If the trajectory of health care inflation had kept on going up at the same pace as it was before the Affordable Care Act passed, even those of you who have health insurance—had health insurance and still have, you'd be paying $1,800 more, on average, in premiums. You're saving that money, even though you don't know it. [*Laughter*] And you're protected from preexisting conditions. So if you lose your job you can always assure yourself that you're going to get health insurance coverage. Insurers can't discriminate against you because you've got, for example, a chronic illness. So that's been very important.

Now, in terms of somebody who does have a chronic illness and they have disability, each case is going to be different. There are going to be—there are laws in place, the Americans for Disabilities Act—with Disabilities Act, that protects people who are officially disabled from being discriminated against. And employers have to find accommodations where possible.

But what we also need to do is to see if we can work with companies to identify some of these illnesses and get them educated, because sometimes, it's just misinformation in terms of them knowing what a person can or cannot do. And one of the trends that we want to encourage in companies is, because of the power of the Internet, people having a little more flex time can make a huge difference.

And that's particularly important for women, by the way, because no matter how enlightened your husband may pretend he is—[*laughter*]—women still oftentimes bear a disproportionate burden when it comes to childcare. And the more we're able to structure flexibility at the workplace, the better off women are going to be, the better off children are going to be, and ultimately, the better off everybody is going to be. That company is going to do better. And that obviously could have some application to somebody who has got a chronic illness, but otherwise, is very productive.

Citizenship/Political Engagement

Ms. Stone. Thank you so much for that question. It really echoes a lot of what we hear from American women who are eager to work, dying to work, even when they are stuck at home for one reason or another. And I think that—I've got a great question from Theresa from Raleigh, the Importance of Being Reese. She's here. She's here somewhere. She said, what can we do as individuals to encourage involvement in gender and wage issues in our communities? We've talked about Government responsibility; we've talked about enterprise responsibility. What is the individual responsibility that we as Americans have to pursue these issues if they matter to us?

The President. Well, I've always said the most important office in a democracy is the office of citizen. And I was recently in Selma celebrating the 50th anniversary of the march there. World was transformed because maids and Pullman porters and young priests and rabbis and—just decided to march and to highlight issues. And so community participation is critical.

And look, I'm going to play the role of interviewer here for a second. Lisa, you tell me, the—when you—you've got this huge network that you guys have been able to set up. And that's part of the power of the Internet, is being able to make sure that people don't feel alone on these issues. They suddenly say, oh, what I'm reading here, that's what I'm going through.

Now, the key is, once you connect like that, with millions of people, how does that then translate into action in specific cities or specific communities? And I don't know the degree to which people have the opportunity through your site not only to share stories, but also to potentially act on them.

Ms. Stone. Well, thank you. When we started this company in 2005, we were trying to an-

swer the question, where are the women who blog and use social media? And the question was easily answered. There were already millions of women doing it. So we pulled together a conference and had an opportunity for women to get together regularly online. Then, Facebook was born. Twitter happened. People started connecting their blogs to community members who were interested in their voices across the board.

SheKnows Media today, I mean, we reach 82 million women every month on—across our sites and 165 million across social media. And that has everything to do with the power of the 20,000 experts in our community. Women are inspiring women every day. And it's very interesting to see the use of the hashtag and the use of social media to literally lean into what they care about.

The President. Right.

Ms. Stone. And we may lean in so hard that we fall over. [*Laughter*] But it doesn't mean that we aren't in there every day. So, for example, the #Obamatownhall that we're working with today, we've had questions come in nationally and internationally for you and for each other about priorities. So it's interesting. For a long time, people wanted to make us a mommy blogger network when, in fact, parenting is just one of the many things I see American women caring enormously about. Thank you for asking.

The President. Absolutely. Good.

The—why don't we get a young person here? Who—this young lady right here. Yes—oh, see, now, you can't do that, now. [*Laughter*] What, you're trying to drop an assist over here. [*Laughter*]

Ms. Stone. This is the ladies basketball team.

The President. All right, what's the team?

Q. We're from Johnson and Wales University ladies basketball team.

The President. Okay. So this must be your point guard here.

Q. One of them.

The President. Yes, because she basically—she took the ball and—[*laughter*]. All right, go ahead.

College Affordability/Student Loans/Community Colleges

Q. So being that we'll be graduating from a private college, it's known, it's a fact that we'll be—have a lot—we will have a lot of student loans. And my question to you is that, is there something that will done to alleviate the bind that's going to be pushed on our backs after we graduate or that can help students that are economically inclined less—less economically inclined?

The President. Right. What year are you in school?

Q. I'm a junior.

The President. Okay. The—so how many juniors do we have? How many seniors? Freshmen? Seniors?

Q. So junior, junior, senior, junior—well, three juniors, and then, everyone else is freshmens.

The President. Okay. You've got a young team, that's good.

Q. It's our first year.

The President. First year, fantastic. The—well, this is something that—along with childcare, college and retirement, those are probably the three things that people feel so much pressure on. And sometimes, they feel pressure at the same time. We had so many student loans, Michelle and I, when we got married that paying back student loans was more than our mortgage at a time when we were already starting to try to save for Malia and Sasha's education. So families feel like, I don't know, even if I'm saving a little bit, what pot do I put it in?

And this is part of the reason why we expanded Pell grants so that we tried to get more grants, fewer loans. The way we did that, by the way, was when I came into office, banks were the pass-through for all student loan programs, and they were taking out a couple billion dollars every year. The thing was, the loans were federally guaranteed, so the banks really weren't taking any risk. And we said, well, why don't we just cut out the middleman, give the loans directly to the students, and then we can expand it for millions of students, which is

exactly what we did. And we actually raised the level of Pell grants.

Second thing we did was capped the interest rate for students on student loans. The third thing we did, which I want a lot of people here to hear about because not as many people take advantage of it: We set up a program called income-based repayment that says, if you are graduating, you can make an arrangement whereby you never pay more than a certain percentage of your income, let's say, 10 percent of your income, which is especially important if you decide, for example, to go into teaching. And you've got to—you love teaching, but you have got all these loans. It makes sure that you can stretch out your loan payments longer, and that is helpful. But in the end, the most important thing we have got to do is actually just reduce the cost of higher education in general.

And that's why this proposal that we put forward for making the first 2 years of community college free is so important. It is one way that we can reduce costs. Because for a lot of young people, the community college may be their best option, either because they just need technical training to go then get a job, in which case, after 2 years, they go work with an associate's degree, and they have very little debt. Or even if they're going to a 4-year university, you can go for 2 years first and then transfer to get your 4-year degree, and you've just cut the amount of tuition and potential debt you've got in half.

Now, this is something that we've put forward; we're going to be continuing to push in Congress. There are other things we're doing, trying to pull together university presidents, community college presidents, and others to try to find other ways to reduce the overall cost of higher education.

So, for example, using more online learning, that could make a difference. Making sure that young people, when they come in, are counseled so that they graduate on time. Because a lot of times, debt increases because kids, they're supposed to graduate in 4 years; it takes them 6 because they started off the first 2 years taking classes that had no application to the things they were interested in, but nobody had told them.

Helping to educate young people on how student loans work and interest rates, "Know Before You Owe." [*Laughter*] Because, I will tell you, and I'll fess up, when I first got into college and I had these—I basically got through with grants and loans, and school was much less expensive for me, so I didn't have much debt undergraduate. But by the time I got to law school, once you were admitted, people just kind of said, well, you know, don't worry about it. And so you're kind of running around thinking, oh, I'm fine. And then, right before you get out, suddenly, they say, oh. [*Laughter*]

So what we've said to schools is no, no, no. Advise the young person before they enroll so that they can start planning ahead of time and, in some cases, maybe they don't spend quite as much money as they need to. Making textbooks cheaper. There are a whole bunch of things that we should be doing that reduces the cost of higher education. And we're working with colleges and universities to try to make that happen.

Ms. Stone. Thank you.

The President. Okay, I think, Lisa, I think this is our last question.

Ms. Stone. One last question. Shall we take one here in the front? Yes, ma'am.

Wage Equality

Q. Let's see if I can get there. [*Laughter*] Thank you so much. Hello, Mr. President. My name is Ashley Taylor. I'm here from the blog the Dose of Reality. I'm also a registered nurse here in Charlotte at a clinic that is greatly benefiting from Obamacare, so we appreciate your work with that. I wanted to ask you, as the mother of two daughters, how would you suggest I best empower them to work hard, study hard, get a good education, if they know from the outset they're going to be paid less than their male counterparts for the same skill set with the same background?

And my second part of that question is, in addition to the Paycheck Fairness Act, is there something that you can do on a Federal level as

far as executive action goes, should Congress continue to stall on this bill?

The President. Well, on the second part of your answer, we've probably exhausted what I can do through executive actions, because basically, what I can do is I can impact Federal contractors, but it's hard for me to go beyond Federal contractors. My executive actions don't apply automatically to the private sector who are not doing business with the Federal Government.

But I think what we need to do is just build a movement, build political pressure, educate people. Make sure that women know and husbands know that this is a family issue and an economic issue. And the thing is, if you asked anybody—I don't care if they're Democrat, Republican, Independent—if you ask them what's fair, they'd say, well, women should be paid the same as men. But it becomes somehow this political issue when this is not political. I mean, there are some areas that are tough where there really is differences of opinion in this country about issues, when it comes to issues like gun safety laws, for example. I mean, there are real passions on both sides, and sometimes, they're not completely reconcilable. But on this one, I guarantee you, the majority of Republicans, voters, they support equal pay for equal work. But when it gets to Congress, somehow, it becomes a political issue. We've got to stop that.

In terms of your daughters, the—look, you've got to remind your daughters that things aren't always perfectly fair, but people who are determined can make them fairer. America is not perfect, but it's a lot better than it was when my grandmother was trying to come up in that bank and hit that glass ceiling. Today, she would have probably gotten—been able to get a college education and would have been more likely to run that bank than she was 30 years ago.

So the way things get better is by that next generation taking ownership and being inspired and seeing their mom working a tough shift and then going out there and still rabble-rousing and—that's what we want. We want all these young people on the basketball team and young ladies who are in attendance here, we want them to feel like the world is wide open to you. You can be—remake this thing.

Ultimately, at some point, you guys are going to be in charge. And so we want to not send a message to them that somehow they're limited. We want to tell them what I tell Malia and Sasha, which is, there's nothing you can't do, because they're already smarter than me as well as better looking. [*Laughter*] Which is why I married Michelle, to improve my gene pool. [*Laughter*]

Listen, this has been great. Thank you, everybody.

Ms. Stone. Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you so much for joining us here.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:52 p.m. at ImaginOn: The Joe & Joan Martin Center. In his remarks, he referred to Dianna Jolly, supervisor, Child Care Resources, Inc.; Lilly Ledbetter, former employee, Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co. plant in Gadsden, AL; former talk show host Phil Donahue; former Gov. James B. Hunt, Jr., of North Carolina; former President George W. Bush; and Warren E. Buffet, chief executive officer and chairman, Berkshire Hathaway Inc. He also referred to his sister Maya Soetoro-Ng.

Remarks at the Wounded Warrior Project Soldier Ride Opening Ceremony
April 16, 2015

The President. Thank you. Good morning, everybody. What a gorgeous day! I will just point out, it is always beautiful at this particular event. It is gorgeous every single day. And I want to thank Vice President Biden and VA Secretary Bob McDonald for being here.

This is the sixth time that we've welcomed the Soldier Ride to the White House. This is one of our favorite events every single year. You all know the story. Over 10 years ago, a young Long Island bartender, a civilian named Chris Carney, dreamed up the idea of biking

coast to coast to raise money and support for our wounded warriors. And back then, he probably would not have predicted how far the Soldier Ride would go, how thousands of Americans would join the cause, how a nation would be inspired by all of you.

We've got a number of folks here who are currently serving or have served in uniform. We've got Army.

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. We've got Navy.

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. Air Force.

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. We've got Marines.

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. And we've got some Coast Guard.

Audience member. Yeah! [*Laughter*]

The President. That's it, man. [*Laughter*]

We've got some extraordinary military families who support you every single mile. So we are among heroes here today. All the riders, I just had a chance to say hi to them, and they look great. Don't get too comfortable though. You've got a lot of miles ahead. This is just a pit stop so we can all cheer you on.

Just to give you a—some sense of who these riders are, we've got heroes like Sergeant William Armstrong. Where's William? There he is in the back. William was 24 years old and serving in Afghanistan when a roadside bomb tore the ligaments in his knee and broke the bones in his leg. As a lifelong distance runner, he was devastated that he might never run again. But he didn't give up. His caretakers at Walter Reed got him a bike so he could get into shape. After a lot of surgeries, months of physical therapy, 2 weeks ago, William ran a marathon.

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert A. McDonald. Incredible.

The President. And I want to quote what William said here. He said, "This Army put me back together," he says. But it was being "with people with similar life experiences . . . that exhilarated and motivated me." Thank you, William, for your incredible service.

We've got Specialist Teresa Ann Jackson. Where's Teresa? There she is right there. Two years ago, while serving as a medic at Fort Campbell, Teresa fell ill with a rare disease that affected her arteries. Doctors had to amputate both her feet. She remembers the shock and isolation she and her husband felt afterwards. And it—again, I want to quote her. "I wasn't expecting to be in a wheelchair at 30," she says. And at first, her—at her first Wounded Warrior event, she found a community of people who welcomed her, who understood what she was going through, who continue to support her today through her recovery. And today, Teresa wants to study to be a social worker so that she can give back to others. Teresa, we thank you for—[*applause*].

And we've got Captain Vincent Cerchione. Where's Vincent? There he is right there. In 2003, Vincent led a dozen soldiers of the Third Infantry Division into battle in Iraq, taking rocket fire on a daily basis. He served two tours there and then came home with the kind of wound you can't always see: posttraumatic stress. But with courage and the support of his wife, Vincent reached out for help, which is what we want all of our warriors to do. He says that when he found the Wounded Warrior Project—and I'm quoting here—"It was the first time since I returned that I'd ever talked to anybody and felt like I wasn't alone." Vincent, you are never alone. And because of your service, we also know that we are never alone and we're always safe. Thank you so much for everything you've done.

So that's what these riders represent here today, that sense of community and support and love for each other. And that's what binds everyone who serves proudly under our flag and all the Americans who cheer you on. It's our chance to say to all our returning heroes that you're not alone, that we've got your back, we're going to be with you every step of the way. We will be with you all that long journey that it often takes to recover every single mile.

You and all the men and women of our Armed Forces represent what's best in America. And for me and Michelle and the girls, for

Joe Biden and Jill, and I know Bob and his family, time with you has been some of the most inspiring parts of our jobs. We could not be prouder of you or more grateful to you and your families for everything you've done to protect our freedom.

And that's why, as Commander in Chief, I'm going to keep doing everything in my power to make sure that we serve you as well as you serve us. That means getting you the care and benefits that you deserve and have earned, including wounds like traumatic brain injury and posttraumatic stress. It means making sure our veterans have the education and the jobs and opportunities that you have to have in order to get your shot at the American Dream that you helped to defend. It means recognizing and supporting the incredible families and caregivers who sacrifice so much. They serve as well. We've got to be there for those families.

So I want to encourage every American along the route to get out and cheer for these men and women. And I want all of our riders—and all those that you're riding for, including some who were left behind on the field of battle—we want all of you to know that we're not just going to be with you for 3 days and these 60 miles. As a nation, as Americans grateful for your sacrifices, we're going to be with you on all the roads of your life ahead.

So God bless you and your families, all who serve. God bless America. With that, I'm going to do my favorite part, which is blow the horn. [*Laughter*] Let's get this ride started.

[*At this point, the President was given an air horn by a member of his staff.*]

The President. Ya'll ready?

Audience members. America!

The President. America! [*Laughter*] Okay. On your marks! Get set!

[*The President sounded the horn, and the ride began.*]

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:24 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Amber Cerchione, wife of Vincent Cerchione, an Army veteran who suffered posttraumatic stress from a rocket attack in Iraq in 2003; and Jill T. Biden, wife of Vice President Joe Biden.

Remarks Honoring Working Families Champions of Change
April 16, 2015

The President. Hey! Hello, everybody. Thank you so much. Thank you. Everybody, have a seat, have a seat.

Well, welcome to the White House, everybody. Picked a nice day to visit. [*Laughter*] And I want to thank Satya not only for the introduction, but also for the great work Microsoft is doing on behalf of working families. It is critical that we recognize that government has a role, but community, business, faith groups, civil society—we all have a part to play in making sure that everybody has got a fair shot in this society.

I want to thank all of our guests, including Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee, who is a long-time believer in these issues, from the great State of Texas.

Every so often, we bring together a group of ordinary people from across America who are making extraordinary contributions to their communities. They're not doing it with a lot of fanfare, but they are driven by a simple desire to make things better, one step at a time, and I suppose this is my bias, as somebody who worked in communities for quite some time, even before I went to law school: a strong belief that change happens not from the top down, but from the bottom up.

We say—we call these folks Champions of Change. You help us raise our own ambitions by showing us what is possible. You create models and templates for success in expanding opportunity or increasing equality or promoting diversity and tolerance. And as a consequence, we learn from your experiences, and we draw inspiration from what you've achieved. And days like this give us a chance to say thank you.

So today we honor 12 Champions who've helped make our Nation move forward in a particular area, and that is supporting working families in a 21st-century economy.

Now, in—thanks partly to the decisions that we made early in the worst financial crisis in our lifetimes, our businesses have now created more than 12 million new jobs over the past 5 years. Unemployment has fallen from a high of 10 percent down to 5½ percent. More kids are graduating. More folks are saving money at the pump because of increased fuel efficiency standards and greater energy production, doubling of clean energy production, reduction of carbon pollution.

More Americans know the security of health care: over 16 million people have health insurance. Our uninsured rate is the lowest that it's been perhaps since we started keeping the kinds of records we do about who's got health insurance and who doesn't. The recovery is reaching more Americans each and every day. More Microsoft stuff is sold, and more Patagonia coats are sold, and—[*laughter*]—which means that folks are interested in seeing how they can expand their businesses.

Now, the question we now face is, how do we make sure that this growth and the recovery benefits everybody and not just some? How do we make sure it's broad based and hence sustainable? Do we accept an economy where only a few of us do spectacularly well, or do we want an economy that generates rising incomes and chances for everybody who's willing to put in the effort?

And in case you weren't sure what the right answer was—[*laughter*]—I believe in the latter approach. I believe in broad-based economic growth with a growing, thriving middle class and ladders of opportunity for folks who are trying to get into the middle class. That's why we call it middle class economics: the idea that the country does best when everybody gets a fair shot and everybody is doing their fair share and everybody is playing by the same set of rules.

And I believe in this in my gut not simply because of ideas of basic fairness, not just because it's more consistent with our democracy, not only because, personally, I wouldn't be here had the country not given me opportunity and so I'm biased in that way, but because there's good, sound economic evidence that when everybody's incomes are going up and working people have more money in their pockets to spend, businesses do better. And we all prosper, and we all thrive, and we're less subject to the bubbles and the speculation, the ups and downs that can throw a modern economy off.

So a key part of middle class economics is helping working families feel more secure in a constantly changing economy. And we do that by bringing workplaces stuck into the last—in the last century into this century, and this is something that I've made a priority as President. Because our workplaces have changed, we have to change with them. So, for example, women now make up about half of America's workforce. More women are their family's main breadwinners than ever before. But our policies haven't completely caught up to that reality. We are still the only advanced country on Earth without paid leave. So when a baby arrives or—and I—there have been a lot of babies in the White House lately—[*laughter*]—see, we have another one coming right here, right in the front row. [*Laughter*]

So when a baby arrives or an aging parent gets sick, too often, workers have to make gut-wrenching choices about whether they can afford to be there when their families need them most. Too many women face unnecessary difficulties on the job, like the difficulty of being paid less than a man for doing the same work. That's a difficulty. Or being reprimanded or fired for taking too many bathroom breaks when you're pregnant. [*Laughter*] Clearly, that's a man making that decision, because they don't have a—5 pounds of kicks pressing down on their bladder. [*Laughter*] Or being forced to take leave when they're still being—perfectly capable of doing their work.

Women can't even depend, by law, on getting a paid day off to give birth. So yesterday I traveled to Charlotte for a conversation with working women about the issues they care about most, heard a lot about the wage gap and

how it impacts families. And as I pointed out, ensuring equal pay for women is a no-brainer. There are some things that are really complicated. Satya and I had lunch before we came out here, and we were talking about some very complicated issues around sort of the future of technology. Paying women the same as men for doing the same job, that's not hard. [*Laughter*] That's not hard.

And it's not a women's issue. As I said yesterday, right now Michelle is not getting paid anything, and she points that out. [*Laughter*] But before we got to the White House, when she was working, I wanted her to get paid the same as a man did because if she was getting paid, that money accrued to our account. [*Laughter*] Just as her expenses accrued to our account. [*Laughter*] So this is a family issue. And obviously, as a dad, this is personal for me, because when Sasha and Malia start their careers, the idea that they'd be treated different as somebody's sons is unacceptable.

And in today's economy, having both parents in the workforce is an economic reality for many families. And yet, in 31 States, high-quality childcare costs are higher than in-State college tuition. Down in North Carolina, where we were yesterday, average cost of childcare, $16,000. If you're making 50, which is middle class, that's hard to manage. Mom and dads deserve to be able to focus on work when they're at work because they've got a safe place for their kids to learn and to grow and it doesn't cost them an arm and a leg.

So things like paid leave, paid sick days, childcare, equal pay—these are family issues, and these are economic issues. Sometimes in this town, they're treated as women's issues or side issues. We have to recognize them for what they are: They are national economic priorities. At a time when women are playing a bigger role in the economy than ever before, anything that holds women back holds back the entire country. When women succeed, America succeeds. That's my belief.

So that's why in my State of the Union Address I challenged Congress to take action on these issues. And I'm going to keep putting the pressure on, and I need you to join me, because America deserves a Congress that doesn't just talk about supporting working families, but actually supports working families.

And while we're waiting for Congress, a lot of Americans are saying, we're just going to go get stuff done on our own. You've got mayors and State legislators and Governors that are moving forward, passing paid leave, raising their State's minimum wage, ending pregnancy discrimination. And business leaders are joining them, because they know—as Satya said—that family-friendly policies are not frills, they are good for the bottom line.

So behind the scenes of all this progress are Champions of Change like the ones that we honor here today. Some have worked on these issues for years, far from the limelight, oftentimes against great odds.

Just to take—I'm just going to cite a few examples so you have a sense of who these people are. More than a decade ago, Netsy Firestein, where's Netsy? [*Laughter*] Raise your hand—there you go. Netsy led a campaign in California for paid family leave. People said it was a long shot. But in 2002, California became the first State in the Nation to guarantee that workers can take time off to care for family without losing their whole paycheck. And 13 years later, only two other States have done the same. But Netsy has proved that it's possible. California is growing; businesses are being created. Not only is it possible, it's the right thing to do. It's patriotic. We should learn from her example and get those numbers up. We need more States to join in.

Renee Stromme is here. Where's Renee? You're right there—there's Renee, right there. Renee lobbied North Dakota to require that employers extend reasonable accommodations to pregnant workers, like being able to sit instead of stand or take more frequent water breaks. And next week, she will watch that bill signed into law. Way to go, Renee.

A few years ago, ReShonda Young joined her family's business in Waterloo, Iowa. I've—I know Waterloo. [*Laughter*] First day of my campaign, or was it the second day? It was the second day. Second day of my campaign, I was

in Waterloo, Iowa. It's a great town. [*Laughter*] I'm sorry, I got interrupted. [*Laughter*]

And so she discovered that the women were paid less than men for doing the same work. And so, as she puts it, she stuck her neck out, had some uncomfortable conversations with her old-school dad. And today, thanks to ReShonda, the family business pays workers fairly. And so ReShonda, right back here—and ReShonda, if I'm not mistaken, turnover has gone down, and employee loyalty is up since they made this change. And the business is doing well. Selling popcorn, right? [*Laughter*]

Popcorn Heaven Founder ReShonda Young. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Yes.

And as we just heard from Satya, Microsoft recently made history by announcing that not only does it already have family-friendly policies—sometimes, you hear the argument, well, it's big companies, we don't have to do the same thing—but now Microsoft says no, no, we want contractors to provide paid leave to employees if you want to do work with Microsoft. And for a company as big as Microsoft, that one change will mean greater security and peace of mind for thousands of families and, hopefully, inspire more companies to do the same for their workers.

But Microsoft is not the only company that is a change agent. We've got the CEO of Patagonia, Rose Marcario, who is here. Patagonia sounds like a cool company to work for, by the way. [*Laughter*] And you get—I assume you get a good discount on good, nice gear? [*Laughter*] But in addition to the nice gear, it offers its new mothers and new fathers 2 months of paid leave. And they have a childcare center on site at their corporate headquarters.

So employees can take paid time off to volunteer for a cause that they believe in. They can spend time at their children's school. People don't have to choose between paying the bills and seeing their kids shine in the class play. And that means that that worker will do whatever it takes to help the company succeed the next time out because they know that Rose and others at the very top are looking out for them.

So not only do we have grassroots activists as Champions of Change, we also have CEOs who are Champions of Change and small-business leaders who are Champions of Change. And I do hope that business leaders across the country follow their example. These companies are making the business case for supporting working families, showing that it's good for the bottom line.

The key to staying competitive in the global economy is going to be our workforce. And the government has a role to play in making sure that we're providing great education at the start, more affordable access to college. But family-friendly policies like these can attract brilliant, hard-working talent. We shouldn't have to choose between rewarding work and raising a family. And we've got to fight for that change. Right now there are too many talented people who are being sidelined, there are too many hard-working people being held back. We make it too hard to both work and have a family.

These Champions of Change have made a difference in this area. Netsy and Renee, they did not give up. ReShonda was willing to endure a little tension. [*Laughter*] Families across the country are better off because of their efforts.

So to all of you, these Champions on stage, we thank you for your commitment to American families. We thank you for your vision and your determination. And as long as I have the privilege of being President, I will be right there with you, shoulder to shoulder. And that goes for the advocates and business leaders and elected officials across the country who are, as we speak, working to give all of our citizens the chance to pursue their dreams. That's what this is all about. That's what I intend to keep fighting for. I could not be prouder of you. Give them a big round of applause once again.

God bless you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:13 p.m. in the South Court Auditorium of the Dwight D.

Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Satya Nadella, chief executive officer, Microsoft Corp.; Netsy Firestein, executive director, Labor Project for Working Families; Renee Stromme, executive director, North Dakota Women's Network; and Levorn Robinson, father of Ms. Young.

Remarks on Signing the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act of 2015

April 16, 2015

I decided that on a day like today, we shouldn't be inside. So I am very pleased to mark a significant bipartisan achievement, and I want to congratulate Speaker Boehner and Leader Nancy Pelosi for the work they did to help make this happen.

For the last 13 years, we have been confronted with what's called a doc fix. Basically, the way the law was written, to deal with Medicaid payments to doctors, there was always the danger each year that suddenly, arbitrarily, doctor payments would get cut off, and that was going to be a significant danger to Medicare patients. And obviously, the doctors would have had a lot of trouble continuing to provide services.

Not only does this legislation permanently fix payments to doctors, but it also improves it, because what it starts doing is encouraging payments based on quality and not the number of tests that are provided or the number of procedures that are applied, but whether or not people actually start feeling better. And it encourages us to continue to make the health care system smarter without denying service. As a consequence, it's going to be good for people who use Medicare, it's going to be good for our seniors. Ultimately, it's going to be good for all of us because what we've seen is, over the last 3, 4 years, the cost of health care has slowed to the lowest levels in 50 years, and part of that's because we're starting to do health care smarter.

This is going to build on that progress that we've already made. It also expands the Children's Health Insurance Program that provides health insurance to young people all across the country, and when our kids are healthy, that means they're going to be healthy adults. Ultimately, that's going to put less strain on the system as well. So this was a bipartisan effort: Republicans and Democrats coming together to do something that's smart and common sense. And my hope is, is it becomes a habit.

But I want to congratulate all of the folks involved. And because we wanted to make sure doctors' payments didn't cut off, I'm signing it now rather than wait for getting Members of Congress down here. Hopefully, sometime next week or the week after, we'll be able to have a reception where I can acknowledge the great work that they did while they're enjoying White House hospitality.

With that, I will start signing the bill.

[*At this point, the President signed the bill.*]

There you go. It's done. Good work.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:44 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. H.R. 2, approved April 16, was assigned Public Law No. 114–10.

Statement on Holocaust Remembrance Day

April 16, 2015

Today, with heavy hearts, we remember the 6 million Jews and the millions of other victims of Nazi brutality who were murdered during the Holocaust.

Yom HaShoah is a day to reaffirm our responsibilities to ourselves and future generations. It is incumbent upon us to make real those timeless words: "Never forget. Never again." Yet, even as we recognize that mankind is capable of unspeakable acts of evil, we also draw strength from the survivors, the liberators, and the "righteous among nations" who represented humanity at its best.

With their example to guide us, together we must firmly and forcefully condemn the anti-Semitism that is still far too common today. Together, we must stand against bigotry and hatred in all their forms. And together, we can leave our children a world that is more just, more free, and more secure for all humankind.

Statement on Senate Action on Trade Promotion Authority Legislation
April 16, 2015

I am pleased that Chairman Hatch, Senator Wyden, and Chairman Ryan have introduced bipartisan legislation to help us negotiate trade agreements that are good for our economy, our businesses, and most importantly, for our workers.

My top priority in any trade negotiation is expanding opportunity for hard-working Americans. It's no secret that past trade deals haven't always lived up to their promise, and that's why I will only sign my name to an agreement that helps ordinary Americans get ahead. At the same time, at a moment when 95 percent of our potential customers live outside our borders, we must make sure that we—and not countries like China—are writing the rules for the global economy.

The bill put forward today would help us write those rules in a way that avoids the mistakes from our past, seizes opportunities for our future, and stays true to our values. It would level the playing field, give our workers a fair shot, and for the first time, include strong fully enforceable protections for workers' rights, the environment, and a free and open Internet.

Our exports support more than 11 million good American jobs, and we know that companies that export pay higher wages than those that don't. Today, we have the opportunity to open even more new markets to goods and services backed by three proud words: Made in America. I look forward to working with Democrats and Republicans in Congress to pass this bill, seize this opportunity, and support more good American jobs with the wages and benefits hard-working families deserve.

I also welcome the introduction of Trade Adjustment Assistance legislation that will strengthen the current program to protect American workers.

The President's News Conference With Prime Minister Matteo Renzi of Italy
April 17, 2015

President Obama. Please have a seat. It is a great pleasure to welcome my partner and friend, Prime Minister Renzi, to the White House. *Benvenuto.* I actually should say welcome back. Not many people know this, but Matteo came to the White House several years ago. He—back then, he was the young, dynamic mayor of Florence. Today he's the young, dynamic Prime Minister of Italy. But even then, I think people recognized that he brought an energy and a sense of vision to where he wanted to see his country go. And today is an opportunity for me to return the incredible hospitality that Matteo and the Italian people showed me last year in Rome, one of the great cities of the world.

Italy, of course, is one of our closest and strongest allies. And any time Italians and

Americans get together, it's also a chance to celebrate the deep bonds of history and friendship and family. As I've said before, I'm not lucky enough to have any Italian ancestry that I know of—[*laughter*]—but I consider myself an honorary Italian because I love all things Italian. And the United States would not be what we are or who we are without the contributions of generations of Italian Americans.

In Rome last year, Matteo spoke eloquently of his visits to the American military cemetery in Florence, and that's a reminder of how Italians and Americans have made extraordinary sacrifices for the freedom that we cherish. And I'm also grateful for my partnership personally with Prime Minister Renzi. We've worked together on several occasions, from Rome to our NATO, G–7, and G–20 summits. I know he is deeply committed to our alliance.

Moreover, I have been very impressed with the energy and the vision and the reforms that he is pursuing to unleash the potential of the Italian people and the Italian economy. His willingness to challenge the status quo and to look to the future has made him a leading voice in Europe. And we're already seeing progress being made with respect to Italy.

So, Matteo, I want to thank you again for the seriousness and sense of purpose that you bring to our work together here today.

This morning we focused on our shared security, starting in Europe. We agreed that the international community needs to continue supporting Ukraine with robust assistance as it pursues economic and political reforms. Along with our international partners, we strongly support the Minsk agreements, and we agree that both Russia and the Ukraine must fulfill all the obligations under these agreements.

I thanked the Prime Minister of Italy's strong support for the international coalition against ISIL. Italy, by the way, is one of the largest contributors of advisers and trainers to help build up Iraqi security forces, and Italy is leading the effort to ensure the areas liberated from ISIL's control are stabilized with an effective civilian police force.

We also spent a considerable amount of time discussing our deep, shared concern for the situation in Libya, where we continue to support U.N. efforts to form a unity Government. Given Italy's leadership role across the Mediterranean, the Prime Minister and I agreed to work together even more intensively to encourage cooperation on threats coming from Libya, including the growing ISIL presence there, as well as additional coordination with other partners in how we can stabilize what has become a very deadly and difficult situation.

More broadly, Italian forces continue to play a vital role from Kosovo to Lebanon to Afghanistan. Coalition forces continue to train and assist Afghan forces, and we want to make sure we transition responsibly as we complete our consolidation by the end of next year.

I updated President—Prime Minister Renzi on the framework that we reached with Iran, our progress towards a comprehensive deal that prevents Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon, and we agreed that until any final deal is reached, sanctions on Iran must continue to be fully and strictly enforced.

So that's what we talked about in the morning. After this press conference, we'll have lunch, and that will give us a chance to focus on what is clearly the top priority of both our peoples, and that is creating a strong, inclusive economy that is creating jobs and opportunity on both sides of the Atlantic.

Like me, Prime Minister Renzi is a strong supporter of T–TIP, the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, which would boost both jobs and exports in Europe and the United States and would include strong protections for workers and public health and safety and the environment. Now that Congress is considering important bipartisan legislation for trade promotion authority, T–TIP negotiations need to make major progress this year.

I'm looking forward to hearing the Prime Minister's assessment of the ambitious economic reforms that he's pursuing to make Italy more competitive and to reinvigorate the Italian economy as a source of growth in Europe. We'll be discussing Europe's effort to find

paths that builds on recent reforms to return Greece to growth within the euro zone.

And we'll be discussing the importance of all our major economies taking ambition—ambitious action on climate change. During its Presidency of the EU, Italy showed real leadership as Europe committed to new targets for reducing emissions. My work with Prime Minister Renzi today is part of our continuing effort to forge a strong climate agreement in Paris this year.

And finally, I want to congratulate Italy and the people of Milan as they prepare for—to host the 2015 World Expo. The focus is on food, something that Italy knows something about, along with wine. But the Expo and our U.S. pavilion is focused not only on outstanding cuisine like Italy's, but also how we feed a growing planet, how we combat hunger and malnutrition, how we put healthy food on our tables, and that's a cause, obviously, that's very close to Michelle's heart.

So we commend Italy's leadership, and I suspect many Americans will be visiting Milan and sampling the food and sampling the wine.

Matteo, *grazie* for your leadership in Italy and Europe and for your partnership on many pressing global issues. I assure you that it is a friendship and partnership that all Americans treasure. And we are grateful that we have such strong bonds between our peoples.

Prime Minister.

[*At this point, Prime Minister Renzi spoke in English as follows.*]

Prime Minister Renzi. Thank you so much, Mr. President. Thank you so much and it is really an honor as a member of the Italian Government to be here in the White House in the heart of freedom around the world.

[*Prime Minister Renzi continued in Italian, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

I will speak in Italian very quickly in order to thank the President of the United States of America for the extraordinary leadership that he has displayed both in terms of his foreign policy as well as in the economic and development model.

The last time we met was in Brisbane during the G–20. I can only say that, as a partner and as an ally, I have to express my appreciation for the work that has been carried out by the United States of America on the very complex Cuba issue. This has been a very complex issue. It's been difficult for the American people, as well as for the Cuban people.

As well, I would like to congratulate the President for the Iranian issues, because at least there is a framework, there's an agreement which we hope will reach a conclusion by June 30.

I would also like to add that when I came to the White House, I brought on my behalf and all of the Italians these feelings of pride for what the President mentioned earlier: for the role of so many Italians in the history of the United States of America, from Christopher Columbus onward, as well as the appreciation and the gratefulness for the sacrifice of young men and women of the United States whom, in these next few days, we will remember for having liberated Italy.

We're very, very proud of what our fighters, our partisans, did because they fought against fascism. They went out in the mountains, out in the *macchie*, and they struggled, they fought. But this would not have been possible without the sacrifice and the commitment of the American Army, young men and women who didn't even know Italy, who died for my grandfather, for my father, for my family, and my children.

This is why, during these days of celebration in Italy, I will be sure—this is the 70th year after the liberation. I will go to a place that I love particularly, which is the American Cemetery at San Casciano, in order to honor all of the American people. And I would like to thank you, dear President, on behalf of all Italians.

We spoke quite a bit and spoke about a number of topics. And I'm quite anxious to talk with President Obama about everything that has to do with the economy. Now, if you look at these last 7 years, from 2008 to 2015, the American economy has had a reduction of the

unemployed and there has been a growth in the GDP. The European economy had an increase in its employment—in unemployed, and its GDP went down. Something just did not work at home. This is why I believe that the experience of the United States Government is a model for the European economy and that we have to be very careful about budgets, about the limitations, about our commitments.

But at the same time, we have to go through a new season of growth and investments. In 2014, we started with the first provisions. There's still much to be done. The American leadership for me is a point of reference.

We also spoke about Libya, as the President said. I just had a meeting—during this meeting, I am convinced that the United States and I—the President and I are fully on the same page. In the next few weeks, we will see that we will reach the fruits of all this commitment. Everything that happens in the Mediterranean Sea is not merely something that has to do with security. And of course, it is, but at the same time, it has to do with justice and the dignity of mankind. This is why the very authoritative cooperation that the United States and—the United States can offer is for Italy and extremely important fact.

We also spoke about the Ukraine, and we spoke about Russia, as the President mentioned. We also mentioned all the issues that have to do with Iran and the very complex framework in the Middle East. I believe that it's very important for us to underscore how, as part of this great alliance, guided by the United States, which is a reference point not just for our choices, but for the ideals, the cultural battle that all of us have to fight.

This is why, dear President, dear Barack, I decided to leave Georgetown University—I went to visit Georgetown, and now, when I leave the White House, I will go the National Gallery, because I know that there is an exhibition on the Florentine Italian Renaissance, and this, of course, is a clear message that tells us how culture is important for a young boy, a young girl. This is the engine, this is the basis of our civilization and our future.

This is a great occasion, the Expo, of course. And I brought a few bottles of wine to Barack because I know that he's a great expert.

[*Prime Minister Renzi spoke in English as follows.*]

I remember in an interview with an Italian journalist when he was a candidate about Tuscan wine. I remember very well a very important interview about it.

[*Prime Minister Renzi continued in Italian, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

But I also believe that it's very important for us—quite aside from any jokes—we must make sure that the Expo becomes a great occasion for the quality of life, the lifestyle, and at the same time, to declare war against poverty. It's just not possible for us to have a word—world in which 1 billion people die because they're obese or because they don't have enough to eat. This is what the Expo is going to be, and the presence of the United States will be an element of great importance. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

And if I may finish, I'd like to say that even if it doesn't have anything to do between the relationship between governments, I said to President Obama that I wanted to thank him for his speech at Selma. This is a personal observation, but it's also a political issue. There are moments in which history can be quite extraordinary, and one of these moments is what this country has lived through over the last 50 years. I think that for those of us who love politics, that speech was a moment of great inspiration and very strong reflection. For this, thank you kindly Mr. President. And thank you for your warm welcome to the White House.

President Obama. Let me just make clear that, with respect to the wine—[*laughter*]—I felt it would be insulting for me not to sample it—[*laughter*]—and to establish the strong commercial bind—bonds between the United States of American when it comes to Tuscan wine. [*Laughter*] So I will give you, Matteo, a

report on whether it's up to the quality that we expect. [*Laughter*]

With that, let me call on Roberta Rampton of Reuters. There we go.

Trade

Q. Thanks. President Obama, some congressional leaders yesterday came to a deal on fast track for trade, but it's clear that many in your party are opposed, including Senator Schumer. And are you worried that your support for this is going to divide your party going into 2016? And will it hurt your party's ability to win? Do you need Hillary Clinton's support on this?

And, Prime Minister, how confident are you that Greece will reach an agreement with its creditors by the end of this month? And how concerned are each of you about the effects that this could have on the global economy if a deal is not reached?

President Obama. On trade, first of all, I want to congratulate Senators Wyden and Hatch for coming up with a bipartisan framework for trade promotion authority. And without getting into the weeds on it, I think it's important to recognize that the trade promotion authority is not the same as a trade agreement. It just gives us a structure whereby, when a trade agreement is presented, it can move forward in a quicker fashion and not get completely bogged down in the usual procedures. And I would be receiving the same trade promotion authority that every President in the postwar era, with the exception of Richard Nixon, has received. So it's not exceptional in that sense.

What is exceptional is that in this framework, for the first time, there are requirements for enforceable labor, environmental provisions. There is a clear attention to issues like human rights. And in many ways, this is the most far-reaching and progressive trade promotion authority that we've seen going through Congress.

And that's important, because, as I've said before, it is entirely understandable that there is some skepticism around trade from working families who live in a town that saw manufacturing collapse and jobs being outsourced. People recognize that there had been circumstances in the past in which trade may have contributed to aggregate growth of the global economy or even the U.S. economy, but hurt workers. And we've learned lessons from that. And this trade promotion authority, thanks to the work of Senators Wyden and Hatch, reflects some of those lessons.

Now, in terms of actually getting a deal done, the first trade agreement that we potentially would present under this trade promotion authority would be the Trans-Pacific Partnership, or TPP. I've spoken to this before, but I will just repeat that 95 percent of the world's markets are outside our borders. The fastest growing markets, the most populous markets are going to be in Asia. And if we do not help to shape the rules so that our businesses and our workers can compete in those markets, then China will set up rules that advantage Chinese workers and Chinese businesses.

And that will set the stage over the next 20, 30 years for us being locked out, us being unable to protect our businesses from discrimination, our agricultural products being excluded from these areas, high tariffs that prevent us from being able to compete fairly. When it comes to services or it comes to the Internet, for example, our ability to maintain intellectual property protection or freedom in the Internet or other requirements that tilt the playing field against U.S. workers, that's what's going to happen.

So what we are doing is negotiating the highest level, highest standard trade agreement in our history, with strong enforceable labor provisions, strong enforceable environmental provisions. And I will be able to show when the final agreement is presented that this is absolutely good for not just American businesses, but for Americans workers. And it's good for the economy, and it's the right thing to do.

Now, last point I'll make on this. The politics around trade have—has always been tough, particularly in the Democratic Party, because people have memories of outsourcing and job loss. The point I've made to my labor friends and my progressive friends is that com-

panies that are looking for just low-cost labor, they've already left. We're already at a disadvantage right now. And the trade agreement I'm proposing would actually strengthen our ability to force other markets to open and strengthen our position compared to where we are right now.

And being opposed to this new trade agreement is essentially a ratification of the status quo, where a lot of folks are selling here, but we're not selling there. Japan is one of the negotiators in this deal. Now, last time I checked, if you drive around Washington, there are a whole bunch of Japanese cars. You go to Tokyo and count how many Chryslers and GM and Ford cars there are. So the current situation is not working for us. And I don't know why it is that folks would be opposed to us opening up the Japanese market more for U.S. autos or U.S. beef. It doesn't make any sense.

So I'm going to be able to make a strong case. But I think it's important when you talk about dividing the party—look, I—we got a Korean trade—free trade agreement passed, we got a Colombia free trade agreement passed, and a Panama free trade agreement passed over the last several years, during my Presidency. It didn't divide the Democratic Party. There's going to be a set of Democratic Senators and House Members who traditionally have just, on principle, opposed trade because the unions, on principle, regardless of what the provisions are, are opposed to trade.

And then, there are others who, like me, believe that we cannot stop the—a global economy at our shores. We've got to be in there and compete. And we've got to make sure we're writing the rules so that we've got a level playing field, because when we do, products made in America and services provided by American firms are the best in the world. And I will continue to make that argument.

And for those who argue that somehow this is contrary to the interests of working families, what I tell them is my whole Presidency has been about helping working families and lifting up wages, and giving workers more opportunity. And if I didn't think this deal was doing it, I wouldn't do it. I didn't get elected because of the sponsorship of the Business Roundtable or the Chamber of Commerce. Those aren't the ones who brung me to the dance.

The reason I'm doing it is because I know this is an important thing to do, and I also know that it sends a signal throughout Asia that we are out there competing and that we are going to help maintain international rules that are fair for everybody and not so tilted in favor of one country that it ends up being bad for not only our commercial prospects, but for other countries over the long term.

That was a very long answer, but it's a big question, and I hadn't had a chance to talk about it.

Sorry, Matteo.

[*Prime Minister Renzi spoke in English as follows.*]

Prime Minister Renzi. Very, very briefly, I think I'm confident, but at the same time, I'm worried, because obviously, the situation in Greece is not—the situation in Europe is not the 2011, is not around the world of 2008, so it's different time. But we must absolutely strongly work to achieve an agreement.

To achieve this agreement, it's important Greece Government respects not all the agreements of the past, because in the European Council, we accept a very normal principle. If there is a moment of election and there is a new leader, it's correct to respect the vote of citizens, in this case, the vote of citizens in Greece. But there are a framework of agreements in the European institutions which are very important Greece—Greek Government must respect.

At the same time, we must, for the future, write a new page in the European economics. I'm absolutely confident about it. It's finished the time of only austerity in Europe. But to achieve this goal, the local government, the national Government must do reforms.

This is important, first of all, for Italy. We are absolutely committed to realize every full promise to our citizens, not European institution, to our citizens. And then we can finally open a discussion about the relation between austerity and growth in European economy.

But now is the time to respect the new framework of agreement. And we will work in this direction.

European Economy/U.S. Economy/Greece

[*The reporter asked a question in Italian, which was translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

Q. Mario Calvo-Platero, Sole 24 Ore. Mr. President, some of your promises has—have already brought investors from the U.S. to Italy. Now these investors would like to know when all these reforms are going to take place. Could you give us a better idea? You spoke about austerity and growth. The markets are very preoccupied. We have public finances that are in a difficult situation. How can you reconciliate a—this austerity when our public finances are in such bad shape?

And I would like to know what you think about the T–TIP——

[*The reporter spoke in English as follows.*]

Q. ——time and again, about Germany holding Europe hostage to its inflationary obsessions. Now, you have just heard from Mr. Renzi that things are changing in Europe, that there are progrowth policies, especially with the ECB taking action with QE action. Is that enough? Have Europe and Italy done enough? Is your complaint over Germany over? And on Libya, did you agree or did you discuss the sale of drones to Italy? Thank you.

[*Prime Minister Renzi spoke briefly in Italian, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

Prime Minister Renzi. Three questions in one, you've just asked. Three questions in one.

[*Prime Minister Renzi continued in English as follows.*]

A special offer—[*inaudible*].

President Obama. We're specialists in that. [*Laughter*]

[*Prime Minister Renzi spoke in Italian, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

Prime Minister Renzi. First of all, the timeline for reforms. I think that I can safely say that the American investors who wish to invest in Italy, but Italian investors as well, finally have a labor market which is more flexible. This has been achieved. Let's say that we have done this with no—then, they have an institutional system, the taxation system, public instruction. In the next 6 months, everything, all this reform will be done.

So what needs to be made absolutely clear is that even if in Italy everybody wants to start—or many people would like to start from scratch again, reforms have begun. They're on their way. And there's no way anyone is going to block them. People who wish to invest at this time find a labor market which is simplified. They also find the quality of the engineers, the people who work, people in Italy in general, a very high quality of people.

But I think that what will be necessary in the next few months is education, education, education—investment in this field. Because in the global world, in order to be a leader in Italy, isn't the number of inhabitants. We're not that many. And perhaps it's not just simply the position, even though we are in a strategic position. What will really count is whether Italians can offer human capital—ideas, development—in future.

Now, in terms of the austerity policies, I think that it's important to bear in mind something that's quite simple. I mean, if—I know that we have to be very clear in our accounts, but we have to bet on growth. The United States are our model.

In the last meeting of the European Board of Directors, President Juncker and Draghi showed us some slides with the results of the United States and in Europe in the last 7 years. Obviously, this attests to the respect for the United States, but it also proves that just based on austerity in Europe, this is not going anywhere. We spoke about this in Brisbane, and we have discussed this with President Obama.

We cannot just look at our budget as, of course, an important limit. Italy is fulfilling all its obligations and it is the country in Europe that is fulfilling all its obligations and all the rules.

Now, in terms of T–TIP, it's a very important objective. We believe that 2015 has to be the turning point, the year of the turning point. As the Italian Government, we are pushing with great determination because we know that with the T–TIP, Italy has everything to gain from the trade and economic stance, but also because we believe that when the United States—and justly so—establish trade agreements with China, with Asia, with other areas in the world, I think that it would be fundamental as a key principle having the same relationship in the logic of our historic friendship between Europe and the United States.

Now, going back to our own party, we represent the party in Italy, which I would like to call the "Democratic Party" one day at a European level. Our party is convinced, and it also maintains the position—even though there are many resistances from the German Social Democrats, I am fully determined to find the agreements. And we will talk about this during our lunch hour as well.

President Obama. First of all, let me make sure that I correct the impression that I have consistently criticized Germany. Chancellor Merkel is a great friend and a great ally. From the time I came into office, when we were in the midst of the great recession, there have been competing economic theories in terms of what's the best way to pull us out of a financially induced crisis of this scale, and it was our strong belief that it was important for us to make the investments, to boost demand, to put money in the pockets of consumers, to strengthen and fortify the banking system so that we wouldn't see a repeat of the kinds of bailout practices and irresponsible practices on Wall Street; and that the best way to bring down the deficit was not just to cut spending, but to grow the economy, as well as initiate the kinds of structural reforms around health care and education and research and development that were going to be important for long-term growth.

And I think we've largely succeeded in stabilizing the economy and then putting it on a growth trajectory. We've now seen 5 straight years of job growth. We've gone from a 10-percent unemployment rate down to 5.5, and we've done this while reducing the deficit by two-thirds, primarily because the economy grew much faster.

And it's been my view with respect to Europe that it's not an either-or situation, but it's a both-and situation. Sometimes, it gets framed as, what's the right answer for Europe? Is it austerity or is it structural reform? And my attitude has been, yes, you need structural reforms of the sort that Matteo is initiating. If the labor markets are too stuck, then it's very hard to hire, particularly for young people. If there's too much bureaucracy to start a new business, then businesses will go elsewhere, or talented entrepreneurs will start businesses someplace else.

So I think Prime Minister Renzi's government is on the right track in initiating the kinds of structural reforms that Angela Merkel and other economists have called on for a long time. But what I've also said is, is that at a time of such low demand and hints of deflation that we were seeing in Europe over the course of the last several years, boosting demand is also important, having some flexibility in meeting fiscal targets is also important, that the sustainability of structural reforms depends on people feeling some sense of hope and some sense of progress. And if all it is, is just getting squeezed, but there's no growth, then over time, the political consensus breaks down, and not only do you not get structural reforms, but you also end up reverting to some of the old patterns that didn't work.

And so I think that the approach that Matteo is describing is the right one: Move forward on the structural reforms, but have flexibility and a strategy for increasing demand, increasing investments.

If you—and by the way, here in the United States, we're not done. I'd like to see us rebuild our infrastructure across this country. That's a

smart investment to make right now. It would put people back to work. It would boost additional demand. More workers would be employed. They would then spend money. You'd get a virtuous cycle. But it's also something that we need to do to stay competitive. So it's a smart combination.

So this is not just a criticism of Europe. I think, globally, all of us have to recognize, global aggregate demand is still very weak. And China is making some necessary transitions towards a more consumer-based, rather than export-based economy. But that means that they're not going to be growing as fast. And that, in turn, has meant that suppliers of raw materials to China are seeing their economies soften.

And what I've said to the Europeans is, don't expect that the United States is simply going to be the engine for everybody, don't want to—expect that you can just keep on selling to the United States, but we can't sell anything to you because your economy is so weak. That won't benefit anybody. And those are concerns that I've expressed across the board.

And this—finally, the last point I would make, this applies to Greece as well. I think Matteo is right. Greece needs to initiate reforms. They have to collect taxes. They have to reduce their bureaucracy. They have to have more flexible labor practices. And when the new Prime Minister came in, I called him, and I said, we recognize you need to show your people that there's hope and that you can grow, and we will be supportive of some flexibilities in how you move forward so that you can make investments, and it's not just squeezing blood from a stone. But you have to show those who are extending credit, those who are supporting your financial system, that you're trying to help yourself. And that requires making the kinds of tough decisions that I think Matteo is beginning to make.

I did—we did not discuss drones.

Q. You did not?

President Obama. We did not.

Last question from this side is Margaret Talev [Bloomberg News].

Legislation Regarding Iran's Nuclear Program/International Efforts To Prevent Iran's Development of a Nuclear Weapon/Russia's Sale of Missiles to Iran/Attorney General–designate Loretta E. Lynch

Q. Thank you, Mr. President; Prime Minister Renzi.

Mr. President, I would like to ask you about Iran. But before I forget, I'm hoping at the end of your answer you might also bring us up to speed a little bit on Loretta Lynch's prospects for confirmation as your AG.

President Obama. I won't forget.

Q. Have you done enough? What do you make of Republicans' most recent moves? Where is this thing going?

On Iran, so much has happened, and so this is going to be one of my three-part questions——

President Obama. Just a general——

Q. No. [*Laughter*] The Cardin-Corker compromise this week really was a pretty significant concession from you. And what I'm wondering is, do you believe that you've now weathered any more congressional sort of bids to derail this? Or are you concerned that because Israel and Iran have now become deeply polarized issues, there's going to be more to fend off?

And you have suggested, but you have not said explicitly, that there must be a phase-out rather than the immediate lifting of sanctions in order for you to agree to a final deal. Can you be definitive on that? In exchange, might you be willing to release part or all of that $100 billion or so in frozen oil assets that Iran has in offshore accounts?

And you seem to be floating the idea that you might want to say something about Russia lifting its ban on the sale of missiles to Iran, so I will throw that your way. [*Laughter*]

Prime Minister Renzi, I wanted to ask you about drones, but since that, shockingly, didn't come up, there's been some deeply troubling news about some of the migrants trying to come from Libya to Italy, violence—reports of violence by Muslims and—pushing the Christians off the boats. And what I wanted to ask you is, how are you managing this? Are you

confident that Italy is able to control the risk of extremists coming in to Europe through Italy? Thank you.

President Obama. All right. I wrote them down. [*Laughter*]

On Iran, I thought Bob Corker and Ben Cardin came to a reasonable compromise. I had two concerns from the start with respect to any steps taken by Congress. The first was to make sure that their actions did not derail or prevent us being able to get the best deal possible and John Kerry, when he is in those negotiations, is not being hobbled or his life being made more complicated by congressional actions until we actually have a deal done. My basic argument was, let us show you if there's a deal or not. If there is, you'll have ample opportunity to review it and opine on it. But right now we're still negotiating, so have some patience.

And I think the final product that emerged out of the Corker-Cardin negotiations, we believe, will not derail the negotiations. So that checked off one box.

The second concern I had was just an issue of Presidential prerogatives. There were a number of people who were supporting Corker's legislation suggesting that, as a routine matter, a President needs to get sign-off from Congress to negotiate political agreements. That is not the case. That has never been the case. This is not a formal treaty that is being envisioned. And the President of the United States, whether Democrat or Republican, traditionally has been able to enter into political agreements that are binding with other countries without congressional approval.

And I still have some concerns about the suggestion that that tradition was in some ways changing. But there was language in the legislation that spoke to this being directly related to congressional sanctions. And that, I think, at least allows me to interpret the legislation in such a way that it not sending a signal to future Presidents that each and every time they're negotiating a political agreement that they have to get a congressional authorization.

So the final thing I'll say about the Corker legislation is that both Senator Corker and Senator Cardin, at least in my understanding, agreed that there is not going to be a whole bunch of poison pills or additional provisions or amendments added to it and that they will be protective of this being a straightforward, fair process for Congress to be able to evaluate any deal that we may come up with and then register its views, but that it's not going to be tilted in the direction of trying to kill the deal. I take them at their word on that. We'll continue to monitor that.

But assuming that what lands on my desk is what Senators Corker and Cardin agreed to, I will sign it. And that will then give Congress an opportunity to see, do we have a deal that reflects the political agreement that I talked about earlier? I expect that it will.

With respect to the issue of sanctions coming down, I don't want to get out of—ahead of John Kerry and my negotiators in terms of how to craft this. I would just make a general observation, and that is that how sanctions are lessened, how we snap back sanctions if there's a violation, there are a lot of different mechanisms and ways to do that. Part of John's job and part of the Iranian negotiators' job and part of the P5-plus-1's job is to sometimes find formulas that get to our main concerns while allowing the other side to make a presentation to their body politic that is more acceptable.

Our main concern here is making sure that if Iran doesn't abide by its agreement that we don't have to jump through a whole bunch of hoops in order to reinstate sanctions. That's our main concern. And I think that goal of having in reserve the possibility of putting back and applying forceful sanctions in the event of a violation, that goal can be met. And it will require some creative negotiations by John Kerry and others, and I'm confident it will be successful. And I very much appreciate, by the way, the support that has been provided by Prime Minister Renzi, as well as his former Foreign Minister, who now is the EU representative in many of these discussions.

And with respect to the Russian sales, I will tell you this is actually a sale that was slated to happen in 2009. When I first met with then-Prime Minister Putin, they actually stopped

the sale, paused or suspended the sale at our request. And I'm, frankly, surprised that it held this long, given that they were not prohibited by sanctions from selling these defensive weapons. When I say I'm not surprised: given some of the deterioration in the relationship between Russia and the United States and the fact that their economy is under strain and this was a substantial sale.

I do think that it sends a message about how important it is for us to look like we are credible in negotiations if, in fact, a deal fails and we are needing to maintain sanctions. Because I've heard some in Congress who are opposed to this deal say either let's just slap on even more sanctions or we'll do sanctions unilaterally regardless of what other countries are willing to do.

The reason that the sanctions regime has worked is because, painstakingly, we built an international coalition that has held this long. And if it is perceived that we walked away from a fair deal that gives us assurances Iran doesn't get a nuclear weapon, then those international sanctions will fray. And it won't just be Russia or China; it will be some of our close allies who will start questioning what the—our capacity or the wisdom of maintaining these.

We don't want to put ourselves in that position. We want to make sure that if there's no deal around the Iran nuclear program, it's because the Iranians were not willing to accept what the international community considered to be an appropriate and fair approach to this problem.

Okay? Phew. [*Laughter*] All right.

Q. [*Inaudible*]

President Obama. Oh, see, I'm still not finished. [*Laughter*] Let me just say this about Loretta Lynch. We've actually seen some outbreaks of bipartisanship and common sense in Congress over the last couple of weeks. Yesterday I signed the SGR fix that initiates not only some real reforms around how our health care system works, but expands insurance for children. We just talked about what I think was at least a constructive process to resolve the question of congressional involvement in Iran.

And yet what we still have is this crazy situation where a woman who everybody agrees is qualified, who has gone after terrorists, who has worked with police officers to get gangs off the streets, who is trusted by the civil rights community and by police unions as being somebody who is fair and effective and a good manager—nobody suggests otherwise—who has been confirmed twice before by the United States Senate for one of the biggest law enforcement jobs in the country, has been now sitting there longer than the previous seven Attorney General nominees combined. And there's no reason for it. Nobody can describe a reason for it beyond political gamesmanship in the Senate on an issue completely unrelated to her.

This is the top law enforcement job in the country. It's my Attorney General who has to interact with his Italian counterparts, or her Italian counterparts, in dealing with counterterrorism issues, in dealing with Interpol, in dealing with our national security, in coordinating with our FBI. What are we doing here?

And I have to say that there are times where the dysfunction in the Senate just goes too far. This is an example of it. It's gone too far. Enough. Enough. Call Loretta Lynch for a vote. Get her confirmed. Put her in place. Let her do her job. This is embarrassing, a process like this.

Thank you. [*Laughter*]

[*Prime Minister Renzi spoke in English as follows*.]

Prime Minister Renzi. About the situation of migrants in the Mediterranean Sea, I think the Mediterranean is a sea and not a cemetery. The problem in this moment is the situation on the ground in Libya we discussed about, Mr. President—or with the President. If you think about, 91 percent of the people who come from Africa to Italy come from Libya. So exactly as 3 years ago, when the people come from Tunisia because the problem was the lack of stability in Tunisia, today, the only way is come back to the peace and stability the Libyan institutions. Obviously, it's not easy. We work every day to find a solution with the United Nations

and then with other partners and the friends and allies in the region. But I think the only way is come back to stability in Libya.

In this period, in this period of transition, Italy is ready to bring responsibility to make the leadership in every diplomatic and counterterrorism efforts. But the key point is stop human trafficking in Mediterranean Sea is a priority for everybody in Europe and for me is absolutely crucial. The words of the President Obama is a priority also for the United States. Stop human trafficking is the only way to give a perspective of justice and also of security, obviously, of course, for the risks of this area.

I think there are not problem of clash of religions in Italy. Maybe yesterday, maybe there were one case about it, but the problem is not a problem of clash of religions, it's a problem of human dignity. We are absolutely committed to solve this problem, and I am confident if this becomes a priority, we achieve a great result.

Libya/Italy-U.S. Counterterrorism Cooperation/International Sanctions Against Russia/Ukraine

[*The reporter asked a question in Italian, which was translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

Q. You just said that Italy is ready to take on its responsibilities in terms of diplomacy and antiterrorist activities. I would like to ask you, who are the protagonists in this region, the people that should be the interlocutors, in order to reach a stability in Libya? And what does antiterrorist activities mean? Are you ready to send the 5,000 men that you spoke about? How do you intend to do so? And also perhaps, you—will you have the support from President Obama, maybe using drones?

[*The reporter continued in English as follows.*]

Q. [*Inaudible*]—first of all, can we expect any time soon specific counterterrorism action of the United States in Libya? And then, concerning Russia, President Renzi has been the last G–7 leader in Moscow. Do you think it was useful? And did you ask and get any specific commitments for the renewal of the sanctions against Russia? Thank you.

[*Prime Minister Renzi spoke in Italian, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

Prime Minister Renzi. Well, let me talk to you about the question on Libya. I will repeat what I said. Obviously, all the countries in this region are countries that are interested in looking and finding—looking for and finding a solution, barring none. We appreciate the work that certain countries are finally doing in the Mediterranean area, Northern Africa, starting by Egypt. So all the countries are part of this huge undertaking. But please allow me to be very clear: Peace in Libya, either the tribes do this or no one is going to do this, no one is going to achieve this. The only way to reach peace is that the tribes finally accept that they're going to go toward stabilization and peace.

And our work is that of looking for this to favor all this at all levels so that this effort does indeed lead to peace. The diplomatic initiatives you are aware of; they're the ones that we are doing with Benardino León, and they're the ones that the Foreign Ministers are also trying to support and to study.

Obviously, this is not a job that starts in Libya. I would like my Italian journalist friends to understand that Libya—which we consider because they're across from us—they're the main problem, but they're part of a more complex, greater problem that has to do with the risk of terrorist infiltrations in Africa. We are feeling the pain for what happened at the University of Garissa in Kenya. But this regards Africa as a whole, as a continent.

A few days ago, we remembered that a year has gone by from when some 100 girls were kidnapped by Boko Haram and remember the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls. This is a moral imperative for all of us. Therefore, the issue of Libya is something that we have to place in a wider context. The technical solutions, our teams are looking at them every single day, and there are obviously technical solutions in which

there is a full awareness—for which there is a full awareness. The United States is next to—the United States—Europe is next to the United States in a huge challenge that will bring the troops in our country to spend more months, more time in Afghanistan, much more so than we had thought. Because if the coalition with the United States considers that the process has to continue, well, Italy will do its part.

Obviously, in terms of the technical solutions that I mentioned, this is not something that has to do with political debates, that has to do with our technical teams, with their expertise. I have to be sure that I have priority and assurance from the United States that this is not something in which Italy is working on its own.

I can tell you that as far we are concerned, the cooperation and the work together with you both in the natural diplomatic way and in the constant work which is done everything single day, which is a job which is done silently, quietly in everyday life, which takes us to heroism. I thought—I'm thinking about the Coast Guards, the men and women that saved those people at sea, that allowed a young woman to give birth on the boat. She was dying, and they saved two lives. This is what we want to do. But at the same time, we also have to be fully aware of the fact that the work that we do together is a job that not only regards Libya, but all of Africa, I might say the whole world.

And allow me to say this without taking the floor too long. This is a job that we are doing everywhere, from Russia to Latin America, Afghanistan to the Middle East. The cooperation and work which is done between the United States and Italy is something out of discussion—that cannot be discussed.

President Obama. We are consistently looking where terrorist threats might emanate, and Libya obviously is an area of great concern. ISIL has been very explicit about wanting to use the chaos inside of Libya as a potential justification for putting their—some of their personnel there. And so the coordination with Italy and with other of our key partners is going to be very important.

We will not be able to solve the problem just with a few drone strikes or a few military operations. You have a country that has been broken into a number of tribal factions. There are some sectarian elements to it, and you don't have a central government that is functioning effectively. So we still have to guard against the use of the territories in Libya as a safe haven for terrorist operations, much in the way we've done with respect to Somalia for many years.

But the answer ultimately is to have a government that can control its own borders and work with us. That's going to take some time. But we will combine counterterrorism efforts in cooperation with Italy and other likeminded nations with a political effort. And we're going to have to encourage some of the countries inside of the Gulf who have, I think, influence over the various factions inside of Libya to be more cooperative themselves. In some cases, you've seen them fan the flames of military conflict rather than try to reduce them.

With respect to Russia, Matteo and I agree that we need implementation of Minsk. And I expressed my strong belief that the European Council needs to continue the current sanctions that are in place until we've seen full implementation of the Minsk agreement. There will be a vote coming up this summer in the European Council. And my expectation is not only Italy, but all countries in Europe will recognize that it would be a wrong message to send to reduce sanctions pressure on Russia when their key implementation steps don't happen until the end of the year. At minimum, we have to maintain the existing sanction levels until we've seen that they've carried out the steps that they're required to under the agreement.

And one of the things that Matteo and I share—and I think the Italian people and the American people share—is a sense of values and principles that sometimes override political expediency. That's part of our DNA, and that's part of our memories because of the history of both our countries.

And I think we have to be realistic and practical in how we look at a problem like Ukraine, but we have to also recall that the reason there

is a unified and prosperous Europe is because enormous sacrifices were made on behalf of ideals and on behalf of principles. And if those principles of territorial integrity and sovereignty start getting ignored, then that carries a cost for Europe and for the world.

Thank you very much. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 12:04 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras of Greece; and former Minister of Foreign Affairs Federica Mogherini of Italy, in her capacity as European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization; and H.R. 2, the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act of 2015. Prime Minister Renzi referred to European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker; Mario Draghi, President, European Central Bank; and U.N. Special Representative in Libya Benardino León. A reporter referred to former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

Remarks on the Observance of National Poetry Month
April 17, 2015

Thank you. Thank you so much. Everybody, please have a seat. Well, first of all, let me thank Madeleine for the wonderful introduction. [*Laughter*] And Madeleine is going to be going to Princeton next year, so her and Michelle were exchanging how special they were, backstage. [*Laughter*] And you know, "President" is a cool title, but "former teen poet"—[*laughter*]—that is a pretty good title as well. And I'm proud to be both. I have to say my poems are not as good as yours, Madeleine. But I was going to recite some poetry, but Michelle said no. [*Laughter*] She said, don't do that. [*Laughter*] No.

Anyway, April is National Poetry Month. So Michelle and I figured what better way to celebrate than with some of America's brilliant young poets. And we've invited poetry fans of all ages to join us as well. And we have one of America's most gifted and accomplished poets, my dear friend, Elizabeth Alexander, who's going to share some of work with us. So I'm not going to speak long.

Poetry matters. Poetry—like all art—gives shape and texture and depth of meaning to our lives. It helps us know the world. It helps us understand ourselves. It helps us understand others: their struggles, their joys, the ways that they see the world. It helps us connect. In the beginning, there was the word. And I think it's fair to say that if we didn't have poetry, that this would be a pretty barren world. In fact, it's not clear that we would survive without poetry. As Elizabeth once wrote, "We encounter each other in words, words spiny or smooth, whispered or declaimed, words to consider, reconsider." That's the power of poetry.

Sometimes, it's only after reading a poem or writing a poem that we understand something that we already went through, that we felt, that we experienced. And that's why we often reach for poetry in the big moments: when we fall in love or lose somebody close to us or leave behind one stage of life and enter into another. A good poem can make hard times a little easier to survive and make good times a lot sweeter.

But poetry does not just matter to us as individuals, it matters to us as a people. The greatness of a country is not just the size of its military or the size of its economy or how much territory it controls. It's also measured by the richness of its culture. And America is America in part because of our poets and our artists and our musicians, all those who have shared their ideas and their stories and helped make us the vibrant and passionate and beautiful country that we are today.

It's not every nation that produces poets like Elizabeth or like Madeleine. There are parts of the world where poets are censored or they are silenced. But that's not how we do it here. That's one of the many reasons why we're such

a special place. If you want to understand America, then you'd better read some Walt Whitman. [*Laughter*] If you want to understand America, you need to know Langston Hughes. Or it—otherwise, you're missing something fundamental about who we are.

And now, for the very special poet here today. I met Elizabeth when we were professors together at the University of Chicago. She and Michelle and I have been friends ever since. So when we were planning my first Inauguration, we decided we better have a poet, and we thought we should have a poet that we know and we love. And she penned this extraordinary poem called "Praise Song for the Day." You all should read it. On a day full of unforgettable moments, hearing Elizabeth read that poem was one of my favorite moments. And she has just written a amazing book that technically is not a poem, but is full of poetry, and I could not be prouder of her.

So congratulations to all the young poets. I look forward to reading your work or hearing your work. But right now I want to introduce Ms. Elizabeth Alexander.

[*At this point, Elizabeth Alexander, Frederick Iseman Professor of Poetry at Yale University, made brief remarks followed by readings from her work. The First Lady then made concluding remarks.*]

NOTE: The President spoke at 4 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to 2014 National Student Poet honoree Madeleine LeCesne, student, Lusher Charter School in New Orleans, LA. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady.

The President's Weekly Address
April 18, 2015

Hi, everybody. Wednesday is Earth Day, a day to appreciate and protect this precious planet we call home. And today, there's no greater threat to our planet than climate change.

Two thousand fourteen was the planet's warmest year on record. Fourteen of the 15 hottest years on record have all fallen in the first 15 years of this century. This winter was cold in parts of our country—as some folks in Congress like to point out—but around the world, it was the warmest ever recorded.

And the fact that the climate is changing has very serious implications for the way we live now: stronger storms, deeper droughts, longer wildfire seasons. The world's top climate scientists are warning us that a changing climate already affects the air our kids breathe. Last week, the Surgeon General and I spoke with public experts about how climate change is already affecting patients across the country. The Pentagon says that climate change poses immediate risks to our national security.

And on Earth Day, I'm going to visit the Florida Everglades to talk about the way that climate change threatens our economy. The Everglades is one of the most special places in our country, but it's also one of the most fragile. Rising sea levels are putting a national treasure and an economic engine for the South Florida tourism industry at risk.

So climate change can no longer be denied or ignored. The world is looking to the United States—to us—to lead. And that's what we're doing. We're using more clean energy than ever before. America is number one in wind power, and every 3 weeks, we bring online as much solar power as we did in all of 2008. We're taking steps to waste less energy, with more fuel-efficient cars that save us money at the pump and more energy-efficient buildings that save us money on our electricity bills.

So thanks in part to these actions, our carbon pollution has fallen by 10 percent since 2007, even as we've grown our economy and seen the longest streak of private-sector job growth on record. We've committed to doubling the pace at which we cut carbon pollution, and China has committed, for the first

time, to limiting their emissions. And because the world's two largest economies came together, there's new hope that, with American leadership, this year, the world will finally reach an agreement to prevent the worst impacts of climate change before it's too late.

This is an issue that's bigger and longer lasting than my Presidency. It's about protecting our God-given natural wonders and the good jobs that rely on them. It's about shielding our cities and our families from disaster and harm. It's about keeping our kids healthy and safe. This is the only planet we've got. And years from now, I want to be able to look our children and grandchildren in the eye and tell them that we did everything we could to protect it.

Thanks, everybody, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 4:05 p.m. on April 16 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast on April 18. In the address, the President referred to U.S. Surgeon General Vivek H. Murthy. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 17, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on April 18.

Statement on the 20th Anniversary of the Oklahoma City Bombing
April 19, 2015

Twenty years ago today in Oklahoma City, two terrorists attacked their own country, killing 168 people and injuring hundreds more. We will never forget the men and women who lost their lives in the bombing that day. The passing of time will never extinguish the pain we feel. But if those murderers hoped to terrorize the American people that day, to break our spirits or shatter the bonds that unite us, then they completely and utterly failed. We will be forever grateful to the first responders who risked their lives to save others, the law enforcement officers and prosecutors who brought the perpetrators to justice, and the ordinary men and women who set an "Oklahoma standard" for resilience that we still hold today.

It is with heavy hearts that Michelle and I send our condolences to the families of those we lost 20 years ago. And it is with great pride that we send our deepest gratitude to all those who have served as an example of America at its best.

NOTE: The statement referred to Terry L. Nichols, who was sentenced to life in prison for his role in the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, OK, on April 19, 1995.

Remarks Honoring the 2014 College Football Playoff National Champion Ohio State University Buckeyes
April 20, 2015

The President. O–H!
Audience members. I–O!
The President. O–H!
Audience members. I–O!
The President. O–H!
Audience members. I–O! [*Laughter*]
The President. That last one was a little weak there. The—everybody, please have a seat. Welcome to the White House. And give it up for the 2014 college football National Champions, the Ohio State Buckeyes!

You may have noticed, we have a lot of Buckeye fans here today, including some Members of Congress. Representative Joyce Beatty was once a leader in the OSU community, and now she represents the OSU community here in Congress.

I want to thank the Ohio State University president, Michael Drake, who is here; Athletic Director Gene Smith; and of course, Coach Urban Meyer. So this is Ohio State Football's eighth National Championship. It's Coach

Meyer's third time winning it, with his second team, which is pretty impressive. I've only done it twice. [*Laughter*] And for the same team both times. [*Laughter*]

This was an historic year in college football. The country got to enjoy its first-ever college football playoffs. And I will say it: It was about time. I cannot claim full credit—[*laughter*]—I will point out that I pushed for a playoff system in 2008. [*Laughter*] I'd say I threw my weight around. Political—PolitiFact, which keeps track of whether politicians keep their promises, this is a promise kept by me. [*Laughter*] So you're welcome, America. It was a great playoffs. [*Laughter*]

It was an exciting season from start to finish. And to say that Ohio State's path to the title felt improbable at times would be an understatement. At one point last year, the Buckeyes were ranked as low as 23d in the Nation. But they kept on battling back, with the help of not one, not two, but three quarterbacks. First, they lost Braxton Miller, a Heisman contender, before the season even started. Then, J.T. Barrett, Big Ten Quarterback of the Year, steps in, has an extraordinary run, but then breaks his ankle against a certain team up north—I guess I'm not allowed to—[*laughter*]. I'm not allowed to—[*applause*]. And then, we learned that Cardale Jones is not your average third-string quarterback. [*Laughter*] Anybody with a nickname like Twelve Gauge has to be taken seriously. [*Laughter*] I told him that I could throw a football 75 yards also, but he didn't believe me. [*Laughter*] So he's—he clearly is a smart kid. [*Laughter*]

But the Buckeyes hit their stride when it mattered most, pitched a 59–0 shutout in the Big Ten Championship, earning their way into the playoff spot, beat top-ranked Alabama in the first round, then rolled up a decisive win against the Oregon Ducks for the eighth National Championship.

At critical moments throughout the season, we learned about the character of this football team. And we met the characters who made up the football team along the way. Like Joey Bosa, Big Ten Defensive Player of the Year. Joey—where's Joey? Right there. A consensus All-American, led the conference in sacks in 2014, including the one that ended the double-overtime game against Penn State. Followed each one with his signature celebration: a shrug. [*Laughter*] Just saying. I use that move sometimes. [*Laughter*] Now, Joey's hair may be short now—and he looks good. I actually like it shorter.

Defensive lineman Joey Bosa. I look good for you.

The President. See, I appreciate that. [*Laughter*] But he assures us that the shrug would be back next year. [*Laughter*]

Wide receiver Evan Spencer was named team MVP in 2014 for his selfless play, great blocking and even a perfectly thrown touchdown pass to Michael Thomas in the Sugar Bowl. Evan, go ahead and wave. And in addition to rushing for over 1,800 yards behind an extraordinary offensive line—as good as we've seen in a very long time—and earning the championship game MVP, Ezekiel Elliott made the NCAA fashion police take a close look at their midriff policies. [*Laughter*] Where's Zeke? Thanks for tucking in your shirt today. We appreciate that. [*Laughter*]

Running back Ezekiel Elliott. You need to get that rule changed.

He said I needed to get the rule changed. Did you see that? [*Laughter*] Look, I already got the playoff, all right? [*Laughter*] I've got other stuff to do now. [*Laughter*]

But in all seriousness, this was a team of true character, of true resilience. As I said to them when I had a chance to shake the hands of all the players, everybody is going to go through ups and downs in life, and how folks handle it, how the quarterbacks on this team supported each other, that's what every organization wants to see—is people stepping up for each other. And not only did they do it on the field; they made Ohio proud off the field. Each year, the Buckeyes pay forward their good fortune with more than a thousand hours of community service and charitable efforts in Central Ohio: visiting young patients in hospitals, helping second graders improve their reading, building playgrounds, supporting the Special

Olympics, stocking shelves for the Mid-Ohio Foodbank.

So the love between this team and their community is mutual. I will say when you get a hundred thousand fans to show up to a practice—[*laughter*]—I think it's fair to say that your fans are a little crazy. [*Laughter*] But obviously it's working for them and it's working for this extraordinary team.

So, Coach Meyer, congratulations to you and the Ohio State University for your National Championship. Good luck this season coming up.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:52 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Michael Thomas, wide receiver, Ohio State University football team.

Remarks Honoring the 2014 NASCAR Sprint Cup Series Champion
April 21, 2015

Hello, everybody! Please have a seat. Welcome to the White House on this beautiful day. And congratulations to Kevin Harvick, the 2014 NASCAR Sprint Cup Champion. Hey! It is always wonderful to have the NASCAR family here. We've got huge fans in the White House, and we've got some big fans, including some Members of Congress who are here.

It's great to have Kevin's crew chief, Rodney Childers, who is here. We've also got Greg Zipadelli—almost messed it up there; it's like Obama, too many vowels—[*laughter*]—and the team from Stewart-Haas Racing. NASCAR's leadership is here as well. Brian France is here, and Mike Helton. Welcome back.

And even though the Budweiser Chevy got the White House parking pass this year, I am sure Tony Stewart doesn't mind adding another Owner's Championship to his collection. So congratulations to Tony.

I also want to offer my condolences to everybody in the NASCAR community on the passing of a legendary reporter and broadcaster, Steve Byrnes. And I know a lot of fans' thoughts and prayers today are with his wife Karen and his son Bryson.

We are here to celebrate, though, Kevin Harvick. This was an exciting year for the "Four Car." As the season started, Kevin had a new team, a new crew chief to adjust to. It usually takes a little time for a driver and a crew chief to find their groove, but Kevin and Rodney seemed to figure out each other in a hurry, sort of like when Joe Biden joined my team. [*Laughter*]

So they had an instant chemistry. And as Kevin can tell you, when you have a trusted partner shouting world-class advice into your ear at every turn, you can't lose. [*Laughter*]

It wasn't long before Kevin and Rodney and the team behind Budweiser Chevy were firing on all cylinders. But the season was not without its ups and downs. By the second race in the season, Kevin had picked up his first checkered flag with Stewart-Haas. And then, came a tough stretch, the kind where most champion seasons are forged. There were blown tires, engine failures, cut oil lines, a slew of obstacles that held the "Four Car" from finishing any higher than 36th out of—in three out of four straight races.

But Kevin and Rodney stuck with it, and by the time the Chase rolled around, this team was ready. A win at Homestead capped a season where Kevin picked up five wins, led more laps than anybody on the grid, picking up his first Sprint Cup champion—Championship. And by the looks of it, with two quick wins and the points lead already in place, 2015 isn't shaping up to be too much different.

Kevin has also found the time to match his contributions on the track with his commitment to family and community away from racing. His wife DeLana and his son Keelan are constant presences on the track. And I know at one point, DeLana even had her own fire suit. I'm sure it looked better than it did on Kevin. And I'm sure that if Michelle decided we were going to start wearing matching outfits, it would be me who adapted to her style. [*Laughter*]

Together, Kevin and DeLana run the Kevin Harvick Foundation, which aims to help un-

derprivileged youth to excel both as students and as athletes. From helping his hometown Boys and Girls Club in Bakersfield, California, renovate a gym and a playground to supporting programming which prevents bullying and violence in his former high school, Kevin—like so many others across NASCAR—is working to make a difference.

So, Kevin, congratulations to you again for an outstanding season. The whole team at Stewart-Haas Racing, keep up the great work. NASCAR, looking forward to seeing more excitement on the track.

Thank you so much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:53 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Greg Zipadelli, crew chief, and Tony Stewart, co-owner, Stewart-Haas Racing; and Brian France, chairman and chief executive officer, and Mike Helton, vice chairman, National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing (NASCAR), Inc.

Remarks on Congressional Passage of the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act of 2015

April 21, 2015

Hello, everybody. What a spectacular day! The Rose Garden is especially beautiful this time of year, and I thought what better place to have Members of Congress and members of the Cabinet and some outstanding advocacy groups come to celebrate something else that is gorgeous, and that is a bipartisan piece of legislation.

The main reason I'm here is to say thank you. I want to thank everybody who's here who helped to pass the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act, otherwise known as the permanent doc fix. [*Laughter*] This law finally solves a serious problem. As all of you know, almost every year for the past 13 years, doctors who care for Medicare patients faced the possibility of an arbitrary cut in their pay. In 2010 alone, it happened five times, and Congress repeatedly scrambled to stop it from happening and patch it over. I remember being involved in a few of those patches myself. All of us said again and again, let's just try to fix this once and for all.

And this time, we finally did. No more temporary patches. I am really excited about it. I actually signed the bill into law last week just to make sure that America's doctors didn't get hit by any deep cuts, even if it was just for a day. And so I wanted to make sure we signed it, without the fanfare. But I figured we could all still enjoy each other's company, because we did not just settle for fixing an old formula, we replaced it with a better one.

We're moving away from the old model, which incentivized more treatment over better treatment, something that costs a lot more money. From now on, we're going to compensate doctors based more on how well they help their patients get healthy and stay healthy. And that's a smarter approach, and it's going to get better results for patients. And I'm confident it's also going to be more cost effective.

I shouldn't say this with John Boehner here—[*laughter*]—but that's one way that this legislation builds on the Affordable Care Act. [*Laughter*] But let's put that aside for a second. [*Laughter*]

This legislation also extends funding for the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Programs, which—[*applause*]. Yay! Which helps connect tens of thousands of new moms to nurses and social workers and critical support that they need for the first months after a child's birth. That means it's a big victory for working families and a big victory for our children.

It extends funding for community health centers, which is a vital resource for families and communities nationwide. And finally, it funds the Children's Health Insurance Program, which ensures millions of kids get the care that they need to grow up healthy and strong. And there's nothing more important than that.

So, obviously, a lot of people were involved in this process, but a couple of special thank yous. First of all, this would not have happened without the Speaker of the House, John Boehner, and we very much appreciate his leadership on this. It would not have happened without the Democratic Leader, Nancy Pelosi. It wouldn't have happened without Senators Orrin Hatch and Ron Wyden and Representatives Fred Upton, Frank Pallone, Paul Ryan, Sandy Levin. I see McCarthy there. He counted votes. [*Laughter*] We're grateful for that, as well.

But most importantly, I just want to thank everybody for showing that Republicans and Democrats can come together and put aside partisanship for something important, not just on small things, not just on the must-dos, but on things that actually make the country work better. We did not, in this case, simply kick the can down the road; we solved a problem, and we made life better for a lot of people. And we crossed one of Washington's perennial cliffs off the list for good. And we proved that's possible. And my hope is, is that that helps build a little more momentum to get some other good stuff done.

We're—I've said this before: We're not going to agree on everything. I mean, there are some areas where—that's why we have a party system—there are strong disagreements. But where we can find areas of agreement, where we can focus on common sense and focus on the people who sent us here, I think there's nothing the American people would rather see than us be able to make this town work. And this was a great start and a great example.

So I want to thank everybody. Appreciate it. Enjoy this beautiful day. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:45 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to House Majority Leader Kevin O. McCarthy. H.R. 2, approved April 16, was assigned Public Law No. 114–10.

Message to the Congress Transmitting a Proposed Agreement for Cooperation Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the People's Republic of China Concerning Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy

April 21, 2015

To the Congress of the United States:

I am pleased to transmit to the Congress, pursuant to subsections 123 b. and 123 d. of the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, as amended (42 U.S.C. 2153(b), (d)) (the "Act"), the text of a proposed Agreement for Cooperation Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the People's Republic of China Concerning Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy (the "Agreement"). I am also pleased to transmit my written approval, authorization, and determination concerning the Agreement, and an unclassified Nuclear Proliferation Assessment Statement (NPAS) concerning the Agreement. (In accordance with section 123 of the Act, as amended by Title XII of the Foreign Affairs Reform and Restructuring Act of 1998 (Public Law 105–277), two classified annexes to the NPAS, prepared by the Secretary of State, in consultation with the Director of National Intelligence, summarizing relevant classified information, will be submitted to the Congress separately.) The joint memorandum submitted to me by the Secretaries of State and Energy and a letter from the Chairman of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission stating the views of the Commission are also enclosed. An addendum to the NPAS containing a comprehensive analysis of China's export control system with respect to nuclear-related matters, including interactions with other countries of proliferation concern and the actual or suspected nuclear, dual-use, or missile-related transfers to such countries, pursuant to section 102A(w) of the National Security Act of

1947 (50 U.S.C. 3024(w)), is being submitted separately by the Director of National Intelligence.

The proposed Agreement has been negotiated in accordance with the Act and other applicable law. In my judgment, it meets all applicable statutory requirements and will advance the nonproliferation and other foreign policy interests of the United States.

The proposed Agreement provides a comprehensive framework for peaceful nuclear cooperation with China based on a mutual commitment to nuclear nonproliferation. It would permit the transfer of material, equipment (including reactors), components, information, and technology for nuclear research and nuclear power production. It does not permit transfers of any Restricted Data. Transfers of sensitive nuclear technology, sensitive nuclear facilities, and major critical components of such facilities may only occur if the Agreement is amended to cover such transfers. In the event of termination, key nonproliferation conditions and controls continue with respect to material, equipment, and components subject to the Agreement.

The proposed Agreement would obligate the United States and China to work together to enhance their efforts to familiarize commercial entities in their respective countries about the requirements of the Agreement as well as national export controls and policies applicable to exports and imports subject to the Agreement. It would have a term of 30 years from the date of its entry into force. Either party may terminate the proposed Agreement on at least 1 year's written notice to the other party.

Since the 1980s, China has become a party to several nonproliferation treaties and conventions and worked to bring its domestic export control authorities in line with international standards. China joined the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in 1992 as a nuclear weapon state, brought into force an Additional Protocol to its International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards agreement in 2002, and joined the Nuclear Suppliers Group in 2004. China is a party to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material, which establishes international standards of physical protection for use, storage, and transport of nuclear material, and has ratified the 2005 Amendment to the Convention. A more detailed discussion of China's civil nuclear program and its nuclear nonproliferation policies and practices, including its nuclear export policies and practices, is provided in the NPAS and in two classified annexes to the NPAS submitted to you separately. As noted above, the Director of National Intelligence will provide an addendum to the NPAS containing a comprehensive analysis of the export control system of China with respect to nuclear-related matters.

I have considered the views and recommendations of the interested departments and agencies in reviewing the proposed Agreement and have determined that its performance will promote, and will not constitute an unreasonable risk to, the common defense and security. Accordingly, I have approved the proposed Agreement and authorized its execution and urge that the Congress give it favorable consideration.

This transmission shall constitute a submittal for purposes of both sections 123 b. and 123 d. of the Act. My Administration is prepared to begin immediately the consultations with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the House Foreign Affairs Committee as provided in section 123 b. Upon completion of the 30 days of continuous session review provided for in section 123 b., the 60 days of continuous session review provided for in section 123 d. shall commence.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
April 21, 2015.

Remarks at Everglades National Park in Homestead, Florida
April 22, 2015

Hello, everybody! Please have a seat. It's good to be back in Florida. [*Laughter*] So I can't think of a better way to spend Earth Day than in one of our Nation's greatest natural treasures, the Everglades. And anybody who comes here to visit—and I advise everybody who's watching who hasn't been down here to come on down—you can see what makes this unique landscape so magical, what the poet Emma Lazarus called "the savage splendor of the swamp." Although, I was informed, it's not technically a swamp. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank our outstanding Secretary of the Interior, Sally Jewell, who's here. Her entire team at the Interior Department and the National Park Service Director Jonathan Jarvis for helping to protect places like this. The Everglades National Park Superintendent Pedro Ramos is doing outstanding work. I want to thank Congressmens Murphy and Carvalho who are here doing outstanding work, as well as Debbie Wasserman Schultz. You'll be pleased to know that they are all in when it comes to protecting the Everglades, and we're very proud of the good work that they're going. We even have the Science Guy, Bill Nye, here. There's Bill.

Now, they're all here—we're all here—because this 1.5 million acres is unlike any place on Earth. It's no wonder that over a million people visited last year alone. The sawgrass prairies and mangrove forests are home to an incredible diversity of wildlife: bald eagles, herons, hundreds of plant species, from pine trees to wild orchids. Believe it or not, South Florida is the only place in the world where you can find both alligators and crocodiles in the same habitat. I'm told this is a good thing. [*Laughter*]

In the words of Marjory Stoneman Douglas, who helped preserve this land, "There are no other Everglades in the world." But part of the reason we're here is because climate change is threatening this treasure and the communities that depend on it, which includes almost all of South Florida. And if we don't act, there may not be an Everglades as we know it.

Two thousand fourteen was the planet's warmest year on record. Fourteen of the 15 hottest years on record have all fallen in the first 15 years of this century. Yes, this winter was cold in parts of our country, including Washington. Some people in Washington—[*laughter*]—helpfully used a snowball to illustrate that fact. But around the world, in the aggregate, it was the warmest winter ever recorded.

This is not a problem for another generation. Not anymore. This is a problem now. It has serious implications for the way we live right now: stronger storms, deeper droughts, longer wildfire seasons. The world's top climate scientists are warning that a changing climate already affects the air that our children are breathing. The Surgeon General and I recently met with doctors and nurses and parents who see patients and kids grappling with the health impacts. The Pentagon says that climate change poses an increasing set of risks to our national security.

And here in the Everglades, you can see the effect of a changing climate. As sea levels rise, salty water from ocean flows inward. And this harms freshwater wildlife, which endangers a fragile ecosystem. The saltwater flows into aquifers, which threatens the drinking water of more than 7 million Floridians. South Florida, you're getting your drinking water from this area, and it depends on this. And in terms of economic impact, all of this poses risks to Florida's $82 billion tourism industry on which so many good jobs and livelihoods depend.

So climate change can no longer be denied. It can't be edited out. It can't be omitted—[*laughter*]—from the conversation. And action can no longer be delayed. And that's why I've committed the United States to lead the world in combating this threat.

The steps that we've taken over the last several years are already making a difference. We're using more clean energy than ever before. America is number one in wind power,

and last year, we generated 20 times more electricity from sunlight than we did in all of 2008—20 times.

We've committed to doubling the pace at which we cut carbon pollution. China, in part because of our actions, has now committed for the first time to limit their emissions. And this means that there's new hope that this year, the world will finally reach an agreement to prevent the worst impacts of climate change before it's too late. We're wasting less energy, with more fuel-efficient cars that save people money at the pump and more energy-efficient buildings that save us money on our electricity bills.

So more clean energy, improved energy efficiency—these steps can help us avoid some of the worst effects of climate change down the road. But we also have to prepare for the effects of climate change that we're already too late to avoid. If you think about it, this is like we're hitting the brakes on a car, but the car is not going to come to a complete halt right away. So some of these changes are already happening, and even if we take the right steps, we're going to have to make some adaptations.

And that's why we've been working with cities and States to build more resilient infrastructure and restore natural defenses like wetlands. And today I want to announce new actions to protect our national parks and our public lands and the communities that rely on them.

First, we're releasing a report showing that every dollar invested in the National Park Service generates $10 for the economy. That's a good investment. I don't run a private equity fund, but I know that if you invest a dollar and you get $10 back, that's a good investment. [*Laughter*]

In 2014, almost 300 million visitors to our national parks spent almost $16 billion and supported 277,000 jobs. So protecting our parks is a smart thing to do for our economy. That's why I've set aside more public lands and waters than any administration in history.

Here in the Everglades, we've already invested $2.2 billion in restoration efforts. With the support of some outstanding Members of Congress, I've proposed another $240 million this year. We want to restore the natural water flow of the Everglades, which we know is one of the best defenses against climate change and rising sea levels. And I'm calling on Congress to fully fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which supports this work across the country.

I'm also announcing $25 million in public and private money for restoration projects at our national parks. And this is part of our broader effort that we've launched to encourage every American to "Find Your Park." Chances are, there's one closer than you think.

Just last weekend, Michelle and I took the girls for a hike in a national park just 20 minutes outside of Washington, DC. As we were walking a trail along the Everglades, we saw a group of schoolkids—couldn't have been more excited about mostly seeing the gators, not seeing me—[*laughter*]—but also learning about the science of the planet that they live on. And I want every child to have that opportunity.

So starting this fall, we're going to give every fourth grader in America an "Every Kid In A Park" pass, and that's a pass good for free admission to all our public lands for you, your families for an entire year. Because no matter who you are, no matter where you live, our parks, our monuments, our lands, our waters—these places are your birthright as Americans.

And today I'm designating America's newest national historic landmark, the Marjory Stoneham Douglas House in Miami so that future generations will know how this amazing woman helped conserve the Everglades for all of us.

We're also working with farmers and ranchers and forest landowners to reduce net greenhouse gas emissions. I'm going to keep doing everything I can to prepare and protect America from the worst effects of climate change, including fighting for clean air, clean water. Because in places like this, folks don't have time, we don't have time, you do not have time to deny the effects of climate change. Folks are already busy dealing with it. And nowhere is it going to have a bigger impact than here in South Florida. No place else. It has to be paying closer attention to this and acknowledging

it and understanding that if we take action now we can do something about it.

This is not some impossible problem that we cannot solve. We can solve it if we've got some political will. And we can solve it in a way that creates jobs. We can solve it in a way that doesn't disrupt our economy, but enhances our economy. And it's a bipartisan issue.

On the way in, I was talking to some folks about the fact that Teddy Roosevelt—he's a Republican—started our National Park System. Richard Nixon started the EPA. George H.W. Bush was the first President, globally, to acknowledge the impacts of climate change and that we needed to do something about it. This is not something that historically should be a partisan issue.

Five years ago, local leaders down here, Republicans and Democrats, formed the bipartisan Southeast Florida Regional Climate Change Compact, an agreement to work together to fight climate change. And it's become a model not just for the country, but for the world.

It's the type of mission that Americans from all walks of life are taking on, from the CEOs of some of our biggest corporations and utilities to student organizations across the country. Because they know that simply refusing to say the words "climate change" doesn't mean that climate change isn't happening. [*Laughter*]

And we know that in our own lives. If you've got a coming storm, you don't stick your head in the sand; you prepare for the storm. You make sure our communities are prepared for climate change. And that's an economic imperative. Protecting the one planet we've got is what we have to do for the next generation. I want Malia and Sasha not only to be able to enjoy this amazing view. I want my grandchildren—way, way long time from now—[*laughter*]—to enjoy this amazing view. And their children, and their children after that. That's what we do as Americans: take responsibility and leave behind for our children something special.

And we are blessed with the most beautiful God-given landscape in the world. It's an incredible bounty that's been given to us. But we've got to be good stewards for it. We have to take care of it. We only get to enjoy things like our amazing national parks because great Americans like Teddy Roosevelt and Marjory Stoneman Douglas and a whole bunch of ordinary folks whose name aren't in the history books, they fought to protect our national inheritance. And now it's our turn to ensure that this remains the birthright of all Americans for generations to come. So many people here are active in your communities, doing what's needed. The young people who are here, the next generation, they're way ahead of us in understanding how important this is. Let's make sure we don't disappoint them. Let's stand up and do what's right before it's too late.

Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:16 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Rep. Patrick E. Murphy; William S. Nye, television personality and executive director of the Planetary Society; and U.S. Surgeon General Vivek H. Murthy.

Remarks on the Deaths of Warren Weinstein and Giovanni Lo Porto
April 23, 2015

This morning I want to express our grief and condolences to the families of two hostages: one American, Dr. Warren Weinstein, and an Italian, Giovanni Lo Porto, who were tragically killed in a U.S. counterterrorism operation. Warren and Giovanni were aid workers in Pakistan devoted to improving the lives of the Pakistani people. After Warren was abducted by Al Qaida in 2011, I directed my national security team to do everything possible to find him and to bring him home safely to his family. And dedicated professionals across our Government worked tirelessly to do so. We also worked closely with our Italian allies on behalf of Giovanni, who was kidnapped in 2012.

Since 9/11, our counterterrorism efforts have prevented terrorist attacks and saved innocent lives both here in America and around the world. And that determination to protect innocent life only makes the loss of these two men especially painful for all of us. Based on information and intelligence we have obtained, we believe that a U.S. counterterrorism operation targeting an Al Qaida compound in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region accidently killed Warren and Giovanni this past January.

Yesterday I spoke with Warren's wife Elaine and Prime Minister Renzi of Italy. As a husband and as a father, I cannot begin to imagine the anguish that the Weinstein and Lo Porto families are enduring today. I realize that there are no words that can ever equal their loss. I know that there is nothing that I could ever say or do to ease their heartache. And today I simply want to say this: As President and as Commander in Chief, I take full responsibility for all our counterterrorism operations, including the one that inadvertently took the lives of Warren and Giovanni. I profoundly regret what happened. On behalf of the United States Government, I offer our deepest apologies to the families.

As soon as we determined the cause of their deaths, I directed that the existence of this operation be declassified and disclosed publicly. I did so because the Weinstein and Lo Porto families deserve to know the truth. And I did so because even as certain aspects of our national security efforts have to remain secret in order to succeed, the United States is a democracy committed to openness in good times and in bad.

Our initial assessment indicates that this operation was fully consistent with the guidelines under which we conduct counterterrorism efforts in the region, which has been our focus for years because it is the home of Al Qaida's leadership. And based on the intelligence that we had obtained at the time, including hundreds of hours of surveillance, we believed that this was an Al Qaida compound, that no civilians were present, and that capturing these terrorists was not possible. And we do believe that the operation did take out dangerous members of Al Qaida. What we did not know, tragically, is that Al Qaida was hiding the presence of Warren and Giovanni in this same compound.

It is a cruel and bitter truth that in the fog of war generally and our fight against terrorists specifically, mistakes—sometimes deadly mistakes—can occur. But one of the things that sets America apart from many other nations, one of the things that makes us exceptional, is our willingness to confront squarely our imperfections and to learn from our mistakes.

Already, I have directed a full review of what happened. We will identify the lessons that can be learned from this tragedy and any changes that should be made. We will do our utmost to ensure it is not repeated. And we will continue to do everything we can to prevent the loss of innocent lives—not just innocent Americans, but all innocent lives—in our counterterrorism operations.

Today we join their families and friends in honoring Warren and Giovanni, two humanitarians who came from different countries, but who were united by a spirit of service. For decades, Warren lived the ideals of our country, serving with the Peace Corps and later with the United States Agency for International Development. He devoted his life to people across Africa and South Asia. He was a loving husband, father, and grandfather who willingly left the comforts of home to help the people of Pakistan. At the time of his abduction, he was a USAID contractor focusing on helping Pakistani families escape poverty and give a better life to their children.

Giovanni's humanitarianism also took him around the world to the Central African Republic, to Haiti, and ultimately, Pakistan. Like Warren, he fell in love with Pakistan and its people and believed passionately that he could made a difference in their lives. Giovanni's service reflected the commitment of the Italian people, our great allies and friends, to the security and dignity of people around the world. And today is a reminder of the bonds of friendship between our countries and the shared values that bind Americans and Italians together.

There could be no starker contrast between these two selfless men and their Al Qa-

ida captors. Warren's work benefited people across faiths. Meanwhile, Al Qaida boasted to the world that it held Warren, citing his Jewish faith. Al Qaida held both men for years, even as Warren's health deteriorated. They deprived these men of precious, irreplaceable years with family who missed them terribly.

Amid grief that is unimaginable, I pray that these two families will find some small measure of solace in knowing that Warren and Giovanni's legacy will endure. Their service will be remembered by the Pakistani men, women, and children whose lives they touched and made better. Their spirit will live on in the love of their families, who are in our thoughts and prayers today, especially Warren's wife Elaine, their daughters Alisa and Jennifer, and their families.

And the shining example of these two men will stand as a light to people the world over who see suffering and answer with compassion, who see hatred and offer their love, who see war and work for peace.

May God bless these two brave men, and may He watch over and comfort their families for all the years to come.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:05 a.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Elaine Weinstein, wife, and Alisa Weinstein and Jennifer Coakley, daughters, of Mr. Weinstein, who was killed in a U.S. counterterrorism operation in Pakistan on January 15.

Remarks Honoring the 2015 Super Bowl Champion New England Patriots
April 23, 2015

The President. Hello, everybody. Welcome to the White House. Please have a seat. And well, maybe before you have a seat, give it up for the Super Bowl Champion New England Patriots! All right, now you can have a seat.

A couple of points I'd make at the outset. First of all, it's usually warmer on the South Lawn this time of year, but given the kind of winter that Boston and New England had, I guess this feels pretty balmy to you. [*Laughter*] Second of all, for some reason that I don't fully understand, there is a disproportionate number of Patriots fans in the White House. [*Laughter*] I obviously did not screen properly when I was hiring—[*laughter*]—but there are a lot of Patriot fans in the White House, and there are also a lot of Patriot fans in Congress. I just also want to point out that, despite the fact that he travels probably more than any human on Earth, somehow, my Secretary of State, John Kerry, found a front row seat to be here today. [*Laughter*] So give it up for John Kerry.

I want to offer my congratulations, first of all, to Patriots owner Robert Kraft, and I also want to acknowledge Coach Bill Belichick. I said to the team, and I think even those of us who have other teams we root for, the Patriots organization is as good as an organization as there has ever been in professional sports. And to be able to maintain that kind of consistent excellence is a rare thing in any field, including on the football field. And that's a testament to outstanding ownership. It's a testament to a Hall of Fame coach. And I'm particularly grateful that Coach decided to dress up today. [*Laughter*] We had some scissors if he wanted to cut the sleeves off. [*Laughter*] Formal hoodies are allowed. [*Laughter*]

I usually tell a bunch of jokes at these events, but with the Patriots in town, I was worried that 11 out of 12 of them would fall flat. [*Laughter*] All right, all right, all right. That whole story got blown a little out of proportion. [*Laughter*] All right. Where were we?

New England Patriots Owner Robert K. Kraft. The Jets gave it to you.

The President. Right, right, right. Here's what makes the Patriots the Patriots. Even in the midst of huge distraction during the biggest media circus of the sports year, they stayed focused. As Coach Belichick would say, it was simply "on to Seattle."

Against the Seahawks, they gave us one of the greatest finishes in Super Bowl history. The Patriots became the first team ever to win the Super Bowl after trailing by 10 points going into the fourth quarter. All game long, you saw what made this team so special.

There was, of course, Tom Brady, an alltime great who couldn't be with us here today, but who engineered a pair of surgical fourth-quarter touchdown drives. You had Julian Edelman playing an unbelievable game after an unbelievable playoffs, clawing for extra yards. Darrelle Revis shutting down receivers like nobody else can. Gronkowski, just being Gronkowski. [*Laughter*] He's not making rabbit ears back there, is he? [*Laughter*] I told him to keep his shirt on. [*Laughter*] So he asked me what would happen if he took it off. I said Secret Service probably wouldn't like it. He said, what could they do to me? [*Laughter*]

But this team came out on top not just because of big stars, but because of guys who aren't necessarily household names. Jamie Collins. Shane Vereen. Rob Ninkovich. And of course, we all became acquainted with a man named Malcolm Butler on the biggest play of the Super Bowl. Where's Malcolm? How are you doing? He's so small you can't even see him. [*Laughter*] But made an unbelievable play of—and showed heart and guts on that goal-line slant pass. Of course, as we also know—and he acknowledged—he had practiced for it. So you've got a combination of somebody with toughness and heart, and you've got a great coach and a great organization that anticipates. And so I think it's fair to say that Malcolm has earned a lifetime of free drinks in every "bah" in Boston. [*Laughter*]

But that's been the story of the Patriots over this past 15 years. There's Belichick and Brady, the most successful player-coach tandem perhaps in NFL history. There's "the Patriot Way," a group that values teamwork and hard work above all else, which is why these guys are able to shine even if the spotlight is not on them. And it works. Since 2001 season, they have four championships, more than any other franchise in that span. Six Super Bowl appearances, more than any other franchise. Twelve division titles. You get the picture. In a league that's known for its parity, they have set a standard for excellence that we may not see again for a very long time.

And the good news is, they're leading the way off the field as well. During the season, Patriots players spend their Tuesdays volunteering in the community, visiting schools, hospitals, getting kids active through the NFL's Play 60 initiative. Earlier today a group of Pats stopped by Walter Reed to visit with our wounded warriors. And we are very grateful to them for that. In fact, in a conversation, one of the docs on the team here served in the Navy for 20 years, and we were talking about the incredible service that our men and women in uniform are rendering every single day. And I think Coach and Bob both acknowledged that they're the kind of heroes that are at a whole other level. And so for our football teams to be able to acknowledge them—because they're all big sports fans—that means a lot.

On Monday, the Patriots Marathon Team ran the Boston Marathon and raised over $230,000, helping to show that 2 years after a terrible tragedy, Boston is stronger than ever.

So I want to congratulate the Patriots for their leadership on and off the field. I just wish the city of Boston would share some of those titles you keep winning with Chicago. I mean, I'm hoping that I get to see the Bears before I leave here. [*Laughter*] But in the meantime, I wish the Patriots organization all the best for what is well-deserved success. Congratulations, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:27 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Thomas E.P. Brady, Jr., quarterback, Julian Edelman, wide receiver, Darrelle Revis, defensive back, Rob Gronkowski, tight end, Jamie Collins, linebacker, Shane Vereen, running back, Rob Ninkovich, defensive end, Malcom Butler, center back, and Matthew T. Provencher, medical director, New England Patriots.

Remarks at an Organizing for Action Summit
April 23, 2015

The President. Hello, hello, hello! Hello, OFA! Thank you. You guys sound fired up. All right, all right, settle down, settle down. [*Laughter*] Settle down. You guys are—what did they put in your coffee? [*Laughter*] That's—yes, I meant you. Sit down. [*Laughter*] Sit down, everybody. Golly. See, they're still taking pictures.

So first of all, I want to thank José for the introduction. He is an example of what inspires me every day. You see, you get a chance to meet people all across the country who are just doing extraordinary things. And all of you are in that category. I could not be prouder of each and every one of you and everything that you're doing. You are out there every day, you're talking to your neighbors, you're talking with your coworkers. You're doing the work to change your communities. And that's how a democracy is supposed to work. That's how America is supposed to work. That's how this country has always moved forward. And that's how it's going to keep moving forward.

Senate Confirmation of Loretta E. Lynch as Attorney General

Before I start with some other issues, I want to say publicly, for the first time—I've been looking forward to saying this—that I am very pleased that Loretta Lynch has now been confirmed as America's next Attorney General. And America will be better off for it. She's spent her life fighting for the fair and equal justice that's the foundation of our democracy. She's going to do a great job helping our communities, keeping them safe, but also making sure our citizens are protected by equal justice under the law.

She's got credibility with law enforcement, but she's also got credibility with communities. And she knows that one of the things that I want to work with her on is making sure that all around the country we are rebuilding trust with respect to our police forces and making sure that they and the communities together are working so that everybody feels safe and everybody feels like the law is working on their behalf. And I can't think of a better person to do it. We are very, very proud of her. She's going to do a great job.

So I'm proud of all of you, and I hope all of you are proud of what we've done together. You think back to how we started this journey, why we started this journey in the first place. We'd gone through years in which too many Americans weren't seeing their hard work rewarded. Wages weren't rising; incomes weren't rising. Schools weren't preparing enough of our kids to get the jobs and careers in this new century. Our health care system was burdened—burdening too many families, too many businesses: too expensive, too inefficient. Other nations were racing ahead of us on clean energy. We were addicted to foreign oil. Just 2 weeks before the 2008 election, we had the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression. Ordinary folks got hit like never before.

But in the face of all that, we believed in something that was more powerful. We believed that America could change. And that's why so many people joined a grassroots campaign—Democrats, but also some Republicans and Independents—active citizens who wanted to do their part to change this country for the better.

We believed we could reverse the tide of outsourcing, we could draw new jobs to America. And over the last 5 years, our businesses have created more than 12 million new jobs.

We believed that we could prepare our kids for a more competitive world. Today, our high school graduation rate is at an alltime high; more young people are finishing college than ever before.

We said we could reduce our dependence on foreign oil and protect our planet, do something about climate change. And today, America is not just number one in oil and gas, we are also number one in wind. We're also generating 20 times more electricity from the sun than—last year than we did the year I took

office. We're doubling the pace at which we cut our carbon pollution, a commitment that I've made and we're going to be working with other countries to meet. That's all because of you.

We believed we could fix a broken health care system. Today, more than 16 million Americans have gained the security of health insurance.

That's change. That's what you made possible. But here's something I want you to understand: We did not take on these fights just because they were progressive priorities. We took them on because they were economic priorities for this Nation and for every family out there. The priorities we've taken on are critical to restoring the security and opportunity for working families in the 21st century, in this new global economy.

We live in a time when our success depends on our skills, our knowledge. That's why we've pushed for higher standards and faster Internet in our schools. That's why we reformed our student loan program and increased grants and tax credits so more people could afford to go to college.

We live in a time when our young people will be trying lots of jobs, different careers. And that's why we made health care more accessible and more affordable and more portable: to give them the freedom to change jobs or launch their own business and not have to worry that they were going to be losing their insurance.

We live in a time when more and more households have both parents in the workforce. That's why we're fighting for things like childcare and paid sick leave and paid family leave. Because hard-working families who are doing the right thing need a little bit of help on those things in order to be successful, in order to be stable.

So the point is, the economy has changed. And we're finally getting to the business of updating our policies to change along with it. We're looking forward; we're not looking backwards. [*Applause*] We're looking forward.

We've got to recognize the realities of the new economy. And we've got to fight to make sure that in America, hard work is still rewarded with the chance to take care of your family, and pass on a sense of optimism and hope in better days for our kids. That was always the vision behind my campaign. That's the vision that we have shared ever since I took office. Those are the values that inform my economic policies.

And so one of the things I want to talk about today—because I don't want to talk about the stuff we all agree on or we've already done. [*Laughter*] I want to talk about some stuff that creates some controversy, because it's important. And one of those policies right now that I'm focused on is new trade agreements with other countries.

And if you were watching MSNBC and all this stuff, and you're thinking, oh, man, well, I love Obama, but what's going on here? [*Laughter*] So I want to set the record straight here. I want everybody to be clear about what we're doing, because I believe in what I'm doing here. The—I want to talk about this because—in part because it's complicated, and also it's full of misinformation. But it's really, really important.

This set of trade agreements that we're looking at, it's—are vital to middle class economics: the idea that this country does best when everybody gets their fair shot, everybody does their fair share, everybody plays by the same set of rules. Simple values. American values. We want to make sure that our own economy lives up to it.

But we've also got to make sure that the rest of the world is a place where we can compete on a global scale. We want to make sure we're on an even playing field, not an uneven playing field. We've got to deal with a place where the rules are different in other countries, and we've got to make sure that those rules work for us. That's why I believe America needs to write the rules of the global economy. We can't leave it to somebody else.

We've got to do whatever we can to help our workers compete. And that's not a left or right issue. It's not a business or labor issue. It's an issue like the others that we've waged slowly,

steadily. It's a question of the past and the future.

Now, I've talked a lot recently about why new trade agreements are important to our economy. But I want everybody to understand so when you go back to your communities and you're talking to people, you are clear about why this is important. Ninety-five percent of the world's customers are outside of the United States, they're outside our borders—95 percent. The fastest growing markets in the world are in Asia. Jobs at businesses that export are good, middle class jobs. On average they pay more than other jobs. If you work for a company that exports, they're paying you probably better on average.

Those are facts. So it's important to our economy, but it's also important to our values. Our values have to reflect—be reflected in these new trade agreements in the way that they haven't always been in past trade agreements.

The—trade has always been tough, and it's always been tough especially in the Democratic Party. A lot of people are skeptical of trade deals, and a lot of times, it's for good reason. Because for decades now, technology made good jobs obsolete, global competition meant jobs were being shipped overseas, past trade deals didn't always live up to the hype. A lot of trade deals didn't include the kinds of protections that we're fighting for today. And I saw it in Chicago and in towns across Illinois where manufacturing collapsed, plants closed down, jobs dried up. When I ran for office, I'd talk about a man I met who had to pack up his own plant before he was laid off. And that made a mockery of the value of community and the dignity of work.

So for a lot of Americans, they attribute those changes to what happened in the aftermath of trade agreements. And I understand that. But what—we've got to make sure we learn the right lessons from that. We can't learn the lesson that somehow the global economy is going to stop and we're going to be able to put a bunch of barriers in front of it.

Because change is happening. You go into any store right now, you go to any company right now, and it's global. So we've got to be able to compete. We're not going to stop a global economy at our shores. That's the wrong lesson to draw. We can't go back to the past. We shouldn't want to. We want to make sure we win the future. That's what America is about: winning the future.

So if America does not write rules for trade that are good for us, if we're not writing the rules of trade for the global economy while our economy is still in a position of global strength—because we're right now the fastest—we're the strongest economy compared to a lot of our competitors—now is the time for us to write rules that make sure that we aren't locked out of markets, that we're able to sell our goods in places like Asia.

We've got to make sure that we write rules so that our workers and our businesses can compete fairly. If we don't, then somebody else is going to write the rules. China is going to write the rules. And when they do it, they'll do it in a way that gives Chinese workers advantages and Chinese businesses the upper hand and locks American goods out. And I refuse to accept that for this country. We've the best workers in the world. We have the best businesses in the world. When the playing field is level, nobody beats the United States of America, products and services coming out of the United States of America. So we can't be afraid to compete.

So when I took office, while we were doing all this other stuff—while we were getting health care passed, and we were trying to raise the minimum wage, and we were changing student loans—I also started thinking about how do we revamp trade in a way that works for working families, working Americans. And that's what we've done negotiating a new trade partnership in the Asia-Pacific region.

It's the highest-standard trade agreement in our history. It is the most progressive trade agreement in our history. It's got strong provisions for workers, strong provisions for the environment. And unlike some past trade agreements, all these provisions are actually enforceable. If you're a country that wants to be in this agreement, you've got to meet these high

standards. Once you're a part of this partnership, if you violate your responsibilities, there are consequences. There are penalties.

So if we have this trade agreement in place, it means that other countries, they've got to treat their workers better. They've got to treat the environment better. They've got to think about logging and fishing and whether that's destroying the planet. They've got to make sure that they've got laws against child labor.

And so it would strengthen our hand overseas, and it gives us the tools to open up other markets to our goods and services to make sure they're playing by the same rules we are. And because this partnership includes Mexico and Canada, it fixes a lot that was wrong with NAFTA when it was passed back in the nineties.

So instead of having a race to the bottom, for lower wages and worse working conditions and more abuse of our natural resources, this is a race to the top. It's not just good for our businesses, it's good for our workers. And along with it, we're making sure that American workers can retool through training programs and community colleges, use new skills to transition to new jobs.

So the bottom line is this: These new trade partnerships would level the playing field. And when the playing field is level, American workers always win.

And I just have to say, as I've been listening to some of this debate, I've got some good friends who are opposed to this trade agreement, but when I ask them specifically what is it that you oppose, they start talking about NAFTA. [*Laughter*] And I'm thinking, well, I had just come out of law school when NAFTA was passed. [*Laughter*] That's not the trade agreement I'm passing. [*Laughter*] So you need to tell me what's wrong with this trade agreement, not one that was passed 25 years ago. And the fact is, is that if you end up just being opposed to this trade deal, then that means you're satisfied with the status quo. But that doesn't make any sense, because the status quo isn't working for our workers.

You go out on the street right now and you look at all the cars that are passing by, you'll see Hondas. You'll see Toyotas. You'll see Nissans. Those are all fine cars; nothing wrong with that. But when you travel to Tokyo, you don't see Fords. [*Laughter*] You don't see Chevys. You don't see Chryslers.

So why would we want to maintain the current status quo, where people are selling a bunch of stuff here and we can't sell there? Why wouldn't we want to rewrite those rules so there is some reciprocity and we can start opening up the Japanese market? That would be good for American workers. Same goes for the other 10 countries in the agreement.

Look, I remember where the auto industry was at when I came into office. I've been to auto plants all across the country that would have closed if American workers hadn't rebuilt and retooled, come back and silenced all the naysayers and proven that America can build some of the best new cars in the world. And they shouldn't be competing with one tied behind their—one hand tied behind their back. They should be able to sell cars everywhere in the world.

But when I hear folks saying, "Oh, this trade deal would destroy the auto industry"—listen, I spent a lot of time and a lot of political capital to save the auto industry. Why would I pass a trade deal that was bad for U.S. autoworkers? That doesn't make any sense.

Under my watch, under my policies, American manufacturing is creating new jobs for the first time since the 1990s. We're opening up new plants at the fastest pace in nearly 20 years. And we—so we shouldn't have all that good work just restricted to selling in the United States. We shouldn't have "Made in the U.S.A." just apply to U.S. customers. We want "Made in the U.S.A." sold everywhere, all around the world. That's good for American businesses and American workers.

So when people say that this trade deal is bad for working families, they don't know what they're talking about. I take that personally. My entire Presidency has been about helping working families. I've been working too hard at this. And I've got some of those folks who are saying this stuff after all I've done to help lift their industries up.

I've spent 6½ years trying to wrestle this economy out of the worst recession since the Great Depression and rebuild it so that it benefits working Americans. I've had to do it against relentless opposition. But every single thing we've done—from Obamacare to Wall Street reform, to student loan reform, to credit card reform, to fighting for a fairer Tax Code, to higher minimum wages, to a smarter workplace—all of it's focused on making sure it's a good deal for middle class families and folks who are working hard to get into the middle class.

I've been talking about things like reversing rising inequality and strengthening social mobility since before it was cool. [*Laughter*] Go back to my first campaign for the United States Senate. I've got a bunch of people now talking about inequality, but back then, they sure weren't. Go back and look at the speech I gave in Kansas 4 years ago on economic fairness. Go back and look at the speech I gave in Southeast DC 2 years ago on income inequality. Back then, folks were saying I was preaching class warfare. Now, suddenly, it's their campaign platforms. [*Laughter*]

Some of these folks are friends of mine. I love them to death. [*Laughter*] But in the same way that when I was arguing for health care reform I asked people to look at the facts—just because somebody comes up with a slogan like "Death Panel," doesn't mean it's true. Look at the facts. Well, the same thing is true on this. Look at the facts. Don't just throw a bunch of stuff out there and see if it sticks.

And we should be mindful of the past. We can't ignore what's happened and why people have felt sometimes that trade agreements weren't working for them, that corporations were shipping out jobs. All those things happened. But we can't ignore the realities of the new economy. And we can't just oppose trade on reflex alone. You've got to fight for trade that benefits our workers on our terms. We've got to give every single American who wakes up, sends their kids to school, rolls up their sleeves, punches in each day the chance to do what we do best: innovate and build and sell the best products and ideas in the world to every corner of the world.

That's what I believe in. Smart, new, 21st-century trade agreements are as important to helping the middle class get ahead in this new economy as things like job training and higher education and affordable health care. They're all part of a package.

Audience member. And decrease the deficit.

The President. Well, I did that too. [*Laughter*] And if I didn't think this was the right thing to do for working families, I would not be doing it.

I mean, think about it. I've got some of these folks who are friends of mine, allies of mine saying this trade deal would destroy the American working families, despite the fact that I've done everything in my power to make sure that working families are empowered. And by the way, they've been with me on everything. [*Laughter*]

So by this logic, I would have had to do all this stuff for the last 6½ years and then, suddenly, just say, well, I want to just destroy all of that. [*Laughter*] Does that make sense?

Audience members. No.

The President. No, it—right answer—it does not. [*Laughter*]

If there was a trade agreement that undercut working families, I wouldn't sign it. The Chamber of Commerce didn't elect me twice; working folks did. I ran for office in the first place to expand the all-American idea of opportunity: No matter where you come from, what you look like, how you started out, who you love, you can make it if you try here in America.

I don't forget where I came from. I don't forget how I started. I moved to Chicago in my early twenties with barely anything except a desire to make a difference. I wanted to make sure my life attached itself to giving people a chance at opportunity: helping kids get a great education, helping parents who live in poverty get decent jobs that let them raise a family, help folks who work hard all day get health insurance so they don't have to go to the emergency room when they get sick.

So I became an organizer, like all of you. And I learned that change comes slow

sometimes, and sometimes, there are disappointments. But I also learned the sense of purpose that comes by working together. I learned that underneath our differences, there are hopes and aspirations and grit and resilience that binds us together. That's why I do this.

But what I also learned was that you don't make change through slogans. You don't make change through ignoring realities. Sometimes, you do things that are tough, but the right thing to do to prepare us for the future.

If I was just looking at the polling, I wouldn't have done health care. But it was the right thing to do. If I—it would be a lot easier for me politically not to do this Iran deal. But it's the right thing to do.

Audience members. Yeah!

Now, those things are popular with Democrats. Every once in a while, there are some things that aren't as popular with Democrats, but they still need to be done because they're the right thing to do. These trade agreements are the right thing to do. And if somebody doesn't agree with that, show me specifically what it is that you're concerned about. I'm happy to have a discussion about it. But don't just throw out a bunch of stuff, making accusations about it.

I'm proud of all of you. And I'm a little envious that a lot of you seem to be better at organizing than I was. [*Laughter*] You're smarter. You're more effective. You've got better tools, like Connect.

So I'm still asking for your help. Keep talking to your friends. Talk to your neighbors. Talk about why this fight matters. Talk about why all the things we're doing we're just continuing to push on. I want you to share OFA content: forward these e-mails, and retweet these tweets. Join the Economic Opportunity group on Connect to engage and get involved with people all across the country who share your hopes and dreams. That's how change starts: each one of you reaching out to somebody else.

You give me hope. You guys are doing extraordinary things. You've done extraordinary things these past 8 years. That's just a preview of what you're going to accomplish in the years ahead.

Thank you, OFA. Love you. All right. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:13 p.m. at the Ritz-Carlton Washington, DC hotel. In his remarks, he referred to José Del Rio, national lead, Organizing for Action's Fulfilling the Promise Initiative.

Remarks at an Organizing for Action Dinner
April 23, 2015

Thank you, Jennifer! Well, I've got nothing to add to that. [*Laughter*] Except just to say thank you.

I got a chance to see all of you backstage and take pictures with you, and some of you have been able basically to record my progressive graying. [*Laughter*] You've got, like, a picture from each year showing how I get older, and Michelle, like Dorian Gray, continues to just stay exactly the same. [*Laughter*] It's a little spooky. [*Laughter*]

But I'm going to be very brief on the front end so that I can just spend some time talking with all of you. Obviously, we've had a very consequential stretch since I last saw all of you. We have had some tough stuff, like losing in the midterm, but we've had some really significant accomplishments, from a climate deal that promises to lead the world globally in making sure that this planet is working for future generations to an initiative on comprehensive immigration reform that says we want Congress to work with us, but we can't wait when we've got so many families out there who are prepared to come out of the shadows and earn a legal path so that they can do right by this country; to making sure that Iran doesn't get a nuclear weapon without having to resort to war; to the work we've done to extend the Children's Health Insurance Program and start

making Medicare more efficient, something we actually got done with Congress, which was a big achievement; to just getting confirmed somebody who is going to be the outstanding next Attorney General of the United States of America.

So we've been busy. [*Laughter*] And I just have to tell all of you that the reason I am so energized and excited and wake up every morning ready to tackle all the problems that are in my inbox is because I know all across the country there are folks like Jennifer, who don't get a big spotlight, who aren't in the newspapers, but because of their story, because of their values, because of their love for a dad and seeing him tear up because he was able to accomplish something he didn't think was possible, because there are tons of folks like that all across the country, I always feel confident about what this country can accomplish. I feel confident there is not a problem out there we can't solve.

And I've now been at this long enough to know that you're going to have some ups and you're going to have some downs. And there are going to be times when the pundits have written you off. But if you remain true to that north star, which was the basis of OFA and the basis for my campaigns—that confidence that when ordinary people come together, they can change this country for the better—when we're true to that, I don't worry about the future. I feel confident about it.

And the reason I've been able to do it is because I've had some folks in this room who have shared those values, through thick and through thin, from the start. And some of you come from places where it's really easy to be an Obama supporter, and some of you come from places that it's really hard to be an Obama supporter. [*Laughter*] But all of you share with me a belief in people like Jennifer.

And what OFA has been able to accomplish so that now it's no longer about reelecting me—it never technically was, but—[*laughter*]—or moving our agenda forward—but I just wanted to make that point. [*Laughter*] But the degree to which now you've got chapters all across the country that are working on local issues—we can't get minimum wage moved through Congress? Let's make sure that a city council passes a minimum wage law. Congress isn't prepared to do a comprehensive childcare, early childhood education bill? Let's find a Governor who wants to do it; we'll work with him. That kind of grassroots, local, boots-on-the-ground, focused, relentless energy—that's changing this country just as much as anything we do here in Washington.

And probably the most important thing that we're doing is, we are seeing—and I see it every day—just this successive wave of young leadership that just keeps on coming up. And it's a little scary now that—I mean, it's bad enough that Malia is going to be going to college next fall, but now I've got all these folks who are running through this process, and now, suddenly, they're just doing incredible things. So there are concrete things we've accomplished. There are people who have health care who wouldn't have it if we hadn't done what we're doing here. There are people who are going to college who wouldn't have been going to college if we hadn't done what we did here. There are young people who would still be living in the shadows, but who are now going to school or in our military and serving this country. If it wasn't for what we had done here, they wouldn't have had those opportunities.

But we've got more work to do. And I just hope you guys feel as inspired as I do about that work, because despite the gray hair, I've got a lot more energy—[*laughter*]—and a lot more work that needs to be done. And I can only do it with you.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:53 p.m. at the Ritz-Carlton Washington, DC hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Jennifer Warner, director of organizing, Organizing for Action, who introduced the President; and Attorney General Loretta E. Lynch. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 24. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement on Senate Confirmation of Loretta E. Lynch as Attorney General
April 23, 2015

Today the Senate finally confirmed Loretta Lynch to be America's next Attorney General, and America will be better off for it. Loretta has spent her life fighting for the fair and equal justice that is the foundation of our democracy. As head of the Justice Department, she will oversee a vast portfolio of cases, including counterterrorism and voting rights; public corruption and white-collar crime; judicial recommendations and policy reviews—all of which matter to the lives of every American and shape the story of our country. She will bring to bear her experience as a tough, independent, and well-respected prosecutor on key, bipartisan priorities like criminal justice reform. And she will build on our progress in combatting newer threats like cybercrime. Loretta's confirmation ensures that we are better positioned to keep our communities safe, keep our Nation secure, and ensure that every American experiences justice under the law.

Statement on Armenian Remembrance Day
April 23, 2015

This year we mark the centennial of the Meds Yeghern, the first mass atrocity of the 20th century. Beginning in 1915, the Armenian people of the Ottoman Empire were deported, massacred, and marched to their deaths. Their culture and heritage in their ancient homeland were erased. Amid horrific violence that saw suffering on all sides, 1½ million Armenians perished.

As the horrors of 1915 unfolded, U.S. Ambassador Henry Morgenthau, Sr., sounded the alarm inside the U.S. Government and confronted Ottoman leaders. Because of efforts like his, the truth of the Meds Yeghern emerged and came to influence the later work of human rights champions like Raphael Lemkin, who helped bring about the first United Nations human rights treaty.

Against this backdrop of terrible carnage, the American and Armenian peoples came together in a bond of common humanity. Ordinary American citizens raised millions of dollars to support suffering Armenian children, and the U.S. Congress chartered the Near East Relief organization, a pioneer in the field of international humanitarian relief. Thousands of Armenian refugees began new lives in the United States, where they formed a strong and vibrant community and became pillars of American society. Rising to great distinction as businesspeople, doctors, scholars, artists, and athletes, they made immeasurable contributions to their new home.

This centennial is a solemn moment. It calls on us to reflect on the importance of historical remembrance and the difficult but necessary work of reckoning with the past. I have consistently stated my own view of what occurred in 1915, and my view has not changed. A full, frank, and just acknowledgement of the facts is in all our interests. Peoples and nations grow stronger and build a foundation for a more just and tolerant future by acknowledging and reckoning with painful elements of the past. We welcome the expression of views by Pope Francis, Turkish and Armenian historians, and the many others who have sought to shed light on this dark chapter of history.

On this solemn centennial, we stand with the Armenian people in remembering that which was lost. We pledge that those who suffered will not be forgotten. And we commit ourselves to learn from this painful legacy so that future generations may not repeat it.

Remarks on the 10th Anniversary of the Office of the Director of National Intelligence in McLean, Virginia

April 24, 2015

Thank you so much. Please, please, have a seat. Thank you very much. Thank you, everybody. Thank you. Please. Well, thank you, Jim, for that introduction. And former Director Negroponte, we are—there he is—we are thrilled to have you here as well.

I am here to help mark the 10th anniversary of the Office of the Director of National Intelligence. And I'm here for a simple reason: Jim asked me to come. [*Laughter*] You see, as you might say with the IC, Jim is one of my best HUMINT sources. He is well placed. His reporting is known to be reliable. So I accepted his invitation with a high degree of confidence. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank you, Jim, and your entire team and leaders from across the IC, for all of you taking the time to welcoming me here today. I'm not going to give a long speech, but I do have three basic messages that I wanted to convey.

The first is that I don't know how astute a consumer of information I am, but I can tell you I sure do rely on it. And those who come and brief me every single morning do an extraordinary job. I will say that the only flaw, generally, in what's called the PDB that I receive is that when Jim provides it, some of you may have heard, he leaves paperclips all over my office. [*Laughter*] They're in the couch; they're on the floor. He's shuffling paper. And so because I knew I was coming over here, one of the things I did was return them all. [*Laughter*] And so this will be available to you. I don't—DNI's budget is always a little tight; we can start recycling these. [*Laughter*] That's going to be critical.

But Jim is often one of the first people that I see in the morning, during the Presidential Daily Brief. Jim always gives it to me straight. He gives me his honest assessment free of politics, free of spin. I trust his integrity. And I can't tell you how invaluable that is in the job that he has. And that culture is one that permeates our IC. It's a culture that reflects the leaders at the top. And nobody, I think, exemplifies that more than Jim Clapper. So I am very grateful for him.

Here at ODNI, Jim has also led important reforms, both within the office and across the intelligence community. Today, the community is more collaborative and more integrated than it has ever been in the past.

And since no good deed ever goes unpunished, in appreciation of this integrity and outstanding work, I sent Jim to North Korea. [*Laughter*] And I know he had a wonderful time in Pyongyang. But thanks to the role that Jim played, he returned home with Kenneth Bae and Matthew Miller to be reunited with their families.

Today is also special to him because it happens to be his 50th wedding anniversary to his wonderful wife Sue. So we want to congratulate the two of them. And fear not, this is not all he's doing for their 50th wedding anniversary. [*Laughter*] My understanding is, they're headed off for a well-deserved anniversary vacation this weekend. So I'm going to move this along. [*Laughter*]

The second reason I wanted to be here was to thank all of you at ODNI. I see Jim or Mike Dempsey, or sometimes Stephanie, every morning. And I know that everything they present reflects incredible hard work on the part of hundreds of people—thousands of people across the various agencies that are represented. And I want you to know that Jim and Mike and Stephanie and all the folks who give me these briefings, they are the first one to acknowledge that they are just the tip of the operation and that they can't do their job if it weren't for the incredible contributions that all of you are making every single day.

I know that sometimes it can seem like a one-way street. You push up your reports, but you don't always know how your work is received by your customers, and I guess I'm the number-one customer. You don't always maybe get feedback. So I'm here just to tell you, you do an outstanding job. The work that you

provide is vital for me being able to make good decisions. And the fact that the work you prepare is giving it to me straight—that doesn't look at the world through rose-colored glasses, that doesn't exaggerate threats, but doesn't underplay the significant challenges that we face around the world—that's vitally important to me and, as a consequence, vitally important to the security of the American people.

So Jim knows it; Mike know it. The people who meet with me are always extolling your virtues. But I figured it would be useful for you to hear it from me directly in saying how much we appreciate the incredible hard work and effort that you make every single day.

Whether it's the PDB, your daily articles, your expert briefs, NIE's, I could not do my job without your insights and your analysis and your judgment.

More broadly, you're dedicated to your founding mission. The 9/11 Commission said we needed to unify our intelligence community. The legislation that created the DNI made you the statutory head of the community overseeing all the agencies.

And it's not an easy task bringing together 17 different organizations. They each have unique histories and missions and cultures and tradecraft. Many of you here represent those agencies. And yet you come here together to create a sum that's even greater and stronger than its individual parts.

And we see the results. We've got more sharing of intelligence across the community and also beyond it, with our other partners. Federal, State, local, and private sectors are now working together more effectively than they have in the past. New technologies and new satellites are being shared, and working across various platforms means that we're able to do a better job both accumulating information, but also disseminating it. There's more transparency than there's been in the past. There's more innovation than there's been in the past. All that is making a difference each and every day.

I know that integrating the efforts and contributions of all 17 organizations, people, expertise, capabilities, is never-ending work. And then, there's the challenge of being as open and transparent as possible, even as we continue to protect intelligence that saves lives.

But I want you to remember the United States is the most professional, most capable, most cutting-edge intelligence community in the world. And part of the reason is because all of you here at ODNI bring it together. It makes a difference.

Which brings me to my third and final point. A message that I hope you share with the colleagues who are not in this auditorium, I want you to share it with all the home agencies: You can take great pride in your service.

Many of you—those of you with gray beards or goatees, or in Jim's case, just no hair—[*laughter*]—are intelligence veterans with decades of service. Some of you are young, and look even younger, a new post-9/11 generation. And over the years, I know some of you have lost good friends and colleagues: patriots, men and women who gave their lives, like those honored in the stars on the Memorial Wall at Langley. On days like today, we remember them and we honor them as well.

These are challenging times. And over the last few years, we've seen unprecedented intelligence disclosures. We've seen wild swings with respect to our budgets because of sequestration and furloughs; increasing demands for intelligence due to everything from Russian aggression in Ukraine to turmoil and ISIL in the Middle East.

And today, like all Americans, our thoughts and prayers also continue to be with the families of Dr. Warren Weinstein and Giovanni Lo Porto. I'm not going to repeat everything I said yesterday, but I do want to make one point again. We're going to review what happened. We're going to identify the lessons that can be learned and any improvements and changes that can be made. And I know those of you who are here share our determination to continue doing everything we can to prevent the loss of innocent lives.

I was asked by somebody, how do you absorb news like that that we received the other day? And I told the truth: It's hard. But the one thing I wanted everybody to know—because I

know you, because I work with you, because I know the quality of this team—is that we all bleed when we lose an American life. We all grieve when any innocent life is taken. We don't take this work lightly. And I know that each and every one of you understand the magnitude of what we do and the stakes involved.

And these aren't abstractions. And we're not cavalier about what we do, and we understand the solemn responsibilities that are given to us. And our first job is to make sure that we protect the American people. But there's not a person that I talk to that's involved in the intelligence community that doesn't—that also doesn't understand that we have to do so while upholding our values and our ideals and our laws and our constitutions and our commitment to democracy.

And that's part of the reason why I'm so grateful to work with you, because I know you share that commitment, understanding that this is hard stuff. Everybody here is committed to doing it the right way. And for that reason, I'm absolutely committed to making sure that the American people understand all that you put in to make sure that we do it the right way. I'm very grateful for that.

This self-reflection, this willingness to examine ourselves, to make corrections, to do better—that's part of what makes us Americans. It's part of what sets us apart from other nations. It's part of what keeps us not only safe, but also strong and free.

And part of what makes our job even more challenging is, is that despite the extraordinary work that's done here and the lives that are saved on an ongoing basis, a lot of our work still requires that we maintain some things as classified. And we can't always talk about all the challenges. And the one thing I know about people in the IC is they don't seek the limelight. That means, sometimes, that the world doesn't always see your successes: the threats that you prevent or the terrorist attacks you thwart or the lives that you save.

But I don't want you or folks across the intelligence community to ever forget the difference that you make every day. Because of you, we've had the intelligence to take out Al Qaida leaders, including Usama bin Laden. Because of you, we've had the intelligence, quickly, that showed Syria had used chemical weapons and then had the ability to monitor its removal. Because of you, we had the intelligence, despite Russia's obfuscations, to tell the world the truth about the downing of Malaysian Airlines Flight 17 over Ukraine. Because of you, we had the intelligence support that helped enable our recent nuclear framework with Iran. And you're going to be critical to our efforts to forge a comprehensive deal to prevent Iran from ever getting a nuclear weapon.

So you help keep us safe, but you also help protect our freedoms by doing it the right way. And the American people and people around the world may never know the full extent of your success. There may be those outside who question or challenge what we do, and we welcome those questions and those challenges because that makes us better. It can be frustrating sometimes, but that's part of the function of our democracy.

But I know what you do. We're more secure because of your service. We're more secure because of your patriotism and your professionalism. And I'm grateful for that. And the American people are grateful as well: to you and your families who sacrifice alongside you.

So it's been 10 long and challenging years. But when we look back on those 10 years, the American people have been a whole lot safer. And I'm confident that over the next 10 years and 10 years after that, as long as we continue to have outstanding patriots like yourselves, we're going to be okay.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:40 p.m. in the Liberty Crossing Auditorium at the headquarters of the Office of the Director of National Intelligence. In his remarks, he referred to Kenneth Bae and Matthew T. Miller, U.S. citizens who were detained in North Korea until their release in November 2014; Deputy Director of National Intelligence Michael P. Dempsey; Principal Deputy Director of

National Intelligence Stephanie O'Sullivan; and U.S. Agency for International Development contractor Warren Weinstein and Italian aid worker Giovanni Lo Porto, who were killed in a U.S. counterterrorism operation against an Al Qaida compound in Pakistan on January 15. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

The President's Weekly Address
April 25, 2015

Hi, everybody. I've talked a lot lately about why new trade deals are important to our economy. Today I want to talk about why new trade deals are important to our values. They're vital to middle class economics: the idea that this country does best when everyone gets their fair shot, everyone does their fair share, and everyone plays by the same set of rules.

These are simple values. They're American values. And we strive to make sure our own economy lives up to them, especially after a financial crisis brought about by recklessness and greed. But we also live in a world where our workers have to compete on a global scale, right now on an uneven playing field, where the rules are different. And that's why America has to write the rules of the global economy: so that our workers can compete on a level playing field.

I understand why a lot of people are skeptical of trade deals. Past deals didn't always live up to the hype. They didn't include the kind of protections we're fighting for today.

We have lessons to learn from the past, and we have learned them. But trying to stop a global economy at our shores isn't one of those lessons. We can't surrender to the future, because we are meant to win the future. If America doesn't shape the rules of the global economy today, to benefit our workers, while our economy is in a position of new global strength, then China will write those rules. I've seen towns where manufacturing collapsed, plants closed down, and jobs dried up. And I refuse to accept that for our workers. Because I know when the playing field is level, nobody can beat us.

That's why, when I took office, we started thinking about how to revamp trade in a way that actually works for American workers. And that's what we've done with a new trade partnership we're negotiating in the Asia-Pacific, home to the world's fastest growing markets.

It's the highest-standard trade agreement in history. It's got strong provisions for workers and the environment, provisions that, unlike in past agreements, are actually enforceable. If you want in, you have to meet these standards. If you don't, then you're out. Once you're a part of this partnership, if you violate your responsibilities, there are actual consequences. And because it would include Canada and Mexico, it fixes a lot of what was wrong with NAFTA too.

So this isn't a race to the bottom, for lower wages and working conditions. The trade agreements I'm negotiating will drive a race to the top. And we're making sure American workers can retool through training programs and community colleges and use new skills to transition into new jobs.

If I didn't think this was the right thing to do for working families, I wouldn't be fighting for it. We've spent the past 6 years trying to rescue the economy, retool the auto industry, and revitalize American manufacturing. And if there were ever an agreement that undercut that progress or hurt those workers, I wouldn't sign it. My entire Presidency is about helping working families recover from recession and rebuild for the future. And as long as I'm President, that's what I'll keep fighting to do.

Thanks, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 4 p.m. on April 24 in the Map Room at the White House for broadcast on April 25. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 24, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on April 25.

Remarks at the White House Correspondents' Association Dinner
April 25, 2015

The President. Good evening, everybody.

Audience members. Good evening.

The President. Welcome to the White House Correspondents' Dinner, the night when Washington celebrates itself. [*Laughter*] Somebody's got to do it. [*Laughter*]

And welcome to the fourth quarter of my Presidency. [*Laughter*] It's true, I—that was Michelle cheering. [*Laughter*] The fact is, I feel more loose and relaxed than ever. Those Joe Biden shoulder massages, they're like magic. [*Laughter*] You should try one. Oh, you have. [*Laughter*]

I am determined to make the most of every moment I have left. Now, after the midterm elections, my advisers asked me, "Mr. President, do you have a bucket list?" And I said, "Well, I have something that rhymes with bucket list." [*Laughter*] Take executive action on immigration? Bucket. [*Laughter*] New climate regulations? Bucket. It's the right thing to do. [*Laughter*]

And my new attitude is paying off. Look at my Cuba policy. The Castro brothers are here tonight. [*Laughter*] Welcome to America, amigos! *Que pasa?* What? It's the Castros from Texas? [*Laughter*] Oh. Hi, Joaquin. Hi, Julián. [*Laughter*]

Anyway, being President is never easy. I still have to fix a broken immigration system, issue veto threats, negotiate with Iran, all while finding time to pray five times a day—[*laughter*]—which is strenuous. [*Laughter*] And it is no wonder that people keep pointing out how the Presidency has aged me. I look so old, John Boehner has already invited Netanyahu to speak at my funeral. [*Laughter*] Meanwhile, Michelle hasn't aged a day. I ask her what her secret is, she just says, "Fresh fruits and vegetables." It's aggravating. [*Laughter*]

The fact is, though, at this point, my legacy is finally beginning to take shape. The economy is getting better. Nine in ten Americans now have health coverage. Today, thanks to Obamacare, you no longer have to worry about losing your insurance if you lose your job. You're welcome, Senate Democrats. [*Laughter*]

Now, I—look, it is true, I have not managed to make everybody happy. Six years into my Presidency, some people still say I'm arrogant and aloof, condescending. Some people are so dumb. [*Laughter*] No wonder I don't meet with them. [*Laughter*]

And that's not all people say about me. A few weeks ago, Dick Cheney says he thinks I'm the worst President of his lifetime, which is interesting, because I think Dick Cheney is the worst President of my lifetime. [*Laughter*] It's quite a coincidence.

I mean, everybody has got something to say these days. Mike Huckabee recently said people shouldn't join our military until a true conservative is elected President. Think about that. It was so outrageous, 47 Ayatollahs wrote us a letter trying to explain to Huckabee how our system works. [*Laughter*]

It gets worse. Just this week, Michele Bachmann actually—[*laughter*]—predicted that I would bring about the biblical end of days. [*Laughter*] Now, that's a legacy. [*Laughter*] That's big. I mean, Lincoln, Washington, they didn't do that. [*Laughter*]

But I just have to put this stuff aside, I've got to stay focused on my job, because for many Americans, this is still a time of deep uncertainty. For example, I have a—I have one friend, just a few weeks ago, she was making millions of dollars a year. And she's now living out of a van in Iowa. [*Laughter*]

Meanwhile, back here in our Nation's Capital, we're always dealing with new challenges. I'm happy to report that the Secret Service, thanks to some excellent reporting by White House correspondents, they're really focusing on some of the issues that have come up. And they have finally figured out a fool-proof way to keep people off my lawn. [*Laughter*]

[*At this point, an image of Sen. John S. McCain III standing on the South Lawn of the White House wearing a cardigan sweater and holding a broom was shown.*]

The President. There he is. It works. [*Laughter*] And it's not just fence jumpers. As some of you know, a few months ago, a drone crash-landed out back. That was pretty serious, but don't worry, we've installed a new, state-of-the-art security system. [*Laughter*]

[*An image of Vice President Joe Biden holding a baseball bat as a small drone hovers over the South Lawn was shown.*]

The President. You know what, let me set the record straight. I tease Joe sometimes, but he has been at my side for 7 years now. I love that man. He's not just a great Vice President, he is a great friend. We've gotten so close, in some places in Indiana, they won't serve us pizza anymore. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank our host for the evening, a Chicago girl, the incredibly talented Cecily Strong. On "Saturday Night Live," Cecily impersonates CNN anchor Brooke Baldwin. Which is surprising, because usually the only people impersonating journalists on CNN are journalists on CNN. [*Laughter*]

ABC is here with some of the stars from their big new comedy, "Black-ish." It's a great show, but I have to give ABC fair warning: Being "Black-ish" only makes you popular for so long. Trust me. [*Laughter*] There's a shelf life to that thing. [*Laughter*]

As always, the reporters here had a lot to cover over the last year. Here on the East Coast, one big story was the brutal winter. The polar vortex caused so many record lows, they renamed it MSNBC. [*Laughter*]

But of course, let's face it, there is one issue on every reporter's minds, and that is 2016. Already, we've seen some missteps. It turns out Jeb Bush identified himself as "Hispanic" back in 2009, which, you know what, I—look, I understand. It's an innocent mistake. Reminds me of when I identified myself as "American" back in 1961. [*Laughter*]

Ted Cruz said that denying the existence of climate change—[*laughter*]—made him like Galileo. [*Laughter*] Now, that's not really an apt comparison. Galileo believed the Earth revolves around the Sun. Ted Cruz believes the Earth revolves around Ted Cruz. [*Laughter*] I—and just as an aside, I want to point out, when a guy who has his face on a "Hope" poster calls you self-centered, you know you've got a problem. [*Laughter*] The narcissism index is creeping up a little too high. [*Laughter*]

Meanwhile, Rick Santorum announced that he would not attend the same-sex wedding of a friend or a loved one. To which gays and lesbians across the country responded, that's not going to be a problem. [*Laughter*] Don't sweat that one. [*Laughter*]

And Donald Trump is here. Still. [*Laughter*]

Anyway. [*Laughter*] It's amazing how time flies. Soon, the first Presidential contest will take place. And I for one cannot wait to see who the Koch brothers pick.

It's exciting. Marco Rubio, Rand Paul, Ted Cruz, Jeb Bush, Scott Walker—who will finally get that red rose? [*Laughter*] The winner gets a billion-dollar war chest. The runner up gets to be the bachelor on the next season of "The Bachelor." [*Laughter*] I mean, seriously, a billion dollars, from just two guys. Is it just me, or does that feel a little excessive? [*Laughter*] I mean, it's almost insulting to the candidates. The Koch brothers think they need to spend a billion dollars to get folks to like one of these people. [*Laughter*] It's got to hurt their feelings a little bit. [*Laughter*]

And look, I know I've raised a lot of money too. But in all fairness, my middle name is "Hussein." [*Laughter*] What's their excuse? [*Laughter*]

The trail hasn't been easy for my fellow Democrats either. As we all know, Hillary's private e-mails got her in trouble. Frankly, I thought it was going to be her private Instagram account that was going to cause her bigger problems. [*Laughter*]

[*Successive images of former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton doing a handstand on a beer keg surrounded by men and women in bathing suits, drawing a mustache on a drunken man passed out on a sofa, and holding two cats were shown.*]

The President. Hillary kicked things off by going completely unrecognized at a Chipotle. Not to be outdone, Martin O'Malley kicked

things off by going completely unrecognized at a Martin O'Malley campaign event. [*Laughter*]

And Bernie Sanders might run. I like Bernie. Bernie is an interesting guy. Apparently, some folks really want to see a pot-smoking Socialist in the White House. [*Laughter*] We could get a third Obama term after all. [*Laughter*] It could happen.

Anyway, as always, I want to close on a more serious note. I often joke about tensions between me and the press, but honestly, what they say doesn't bother me. I understand we've got an adversarial system. I'm a mellow sort of guy.

And that's why I invited Luther, my anger translator, to join me here tonight. [*Laughter*]

[*Comedian Keegan-Michael Key entered the stage as "Luther," the President's "Anger Translator," a character he plays on Comedy Central's "Key and Peele" program.*]

Mr. Key. Hold on to your lily-white butts. [*Laughter*]

The President. In our fast-changing world, traditions like the White House Correspondents' dinner are important.

Mr. Key. I mean, really, what is this dinner? [*Laughter*] And why am I required to come to it? [*Laughter*] Jeb Bush, do you really want to do this? [*Laughter*]

The President. Because despite our differences, we count on the press to shed light on the most important issues of the day.

Mr. Key. And we can count on Fox News to terrify old White people with some nonsense! [*Laughter*] "Sharia law is coming to Cleveland. Run for the damn hills!" [*Laughter*] Y'all is ridiculous. [*Laughter*]

The President. We won't always see eye to eye.

Mr. Key. Oh, and CNN, thank you so much for the wall-to-wall Ebola coverage. For 2 whole weeks, we were one step away from "The Walking Dead." [*Laughter*] And then, you all got up and just moved on to the next day. That was awesome. Oh, and by the way, just if you haven't noticed, you don't have Ebola! [*Laughter*]

The President. But I still deeply appreciate the work that you do.

Mr. Key. Y'all remember when I had that big, old hole in the bottom of the Gulf of Mexico, and then I plugged it? Remember that? Which "Obama's Katrina" was that one? Was that 19? Or was it 20? Because I can't remember. [*Laughter*]

The President. Protecting our democracy is more important than ever. For example, the Supreme Court ruled that the donor who gave Ted Cruz $6 million was just exercising free speech.

Mr. Key. Yeah, that's the kind of speech like this: "I just wasted $6 million." [*Laughter*]

The President. And it's not just Republicans. Hillary will have to raise huge sums of money too.

Mr. Key. Oh, yes. She gonna get that money. She gonna get all the money. Khaleesi is coming to Westeros. [*Laughter*] So watch out! [*Laughter*] Whew!

The President. The nonstop focus on billionaire donors creates real problems for our democracy.

Mr. Key. And that's why we're running for a third term! [*Laughter*]

The President. No, we're not.

Mr. Key. We're not?

The President. No.

Mr. Key. Who the hell said that? [*Laughter*]

The President. But we do need to stay focused on some big challenges, like climate change.

Mr. Key. Hey, listen, y'all, if you haven't noticed, California is bone dry. [*Laughter*] It looks like a trailer for the new "Mad Max" movie up in there. [*Laughter*] Y'all think that Bradley Cooper came here because he wants to talk to Chuck Todd? [*Laughter*] He needed a glass of water. Come on! [*Laughter*]

The President. The science is clear: Nine of the 10 hottest years ever came in the last decade.

Mr. Key. Now, I'm not a scientist, but I do know how to count to 10. [*Laughter*]

The President. Rising seas, more violent storms.

Mr. Key. We've got mosquitos. Sweaty people on the train, stinking it up. It's just nasty. [*Laughter*]

The President. I mean, look at what's happening right now. Every serious scientist says we need to act. The Pentagon says it's a national security risk. Miami floods on a sunny day, and instead of doing anything about it, we've got elected officials throwing snowballs in the Senate!

Mr. Key. Okay, Mr. President. Okay, I think they got it, bro.

The President. It is crazy! What about our kids? What kind of stupid, shortsighted, irresponsible bull——

Mr. Key. Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa! Hey! [*Laughter*]

The President. What?

Mr. Key. Okay. No. Hey! [*Laughter*]

The President. What?

Mr. Key. All due respect, sir. You don't need an anger translator. [*Laughter*] You need counseling. [*Laughter*] So now I'm out of here, man. I ain't trying to get into all this. [*Laughter*]

The President. Go.

[*As Mr. Key left the stage, he spoke to the First Lady, who was seated at the dais, as follows.*]

Mr. Key. He crazy. [*Laughter*]

The President. Luther, my anger translator, ladies and gentlemen. Now that I got that off my chest—[*laughter*].

Investigative journalism, explanatory journalism, journalism that exposes corruption and injustice and gives a voice to the different and the marginalized, the voiceless—that's power. It's a privilege. It's as important to America's trajectory—to our values, our ideals—than anything that we could do in elected office.

We remember journalists we lost over the past year, journalists like Steven Sotloff and James Foley, murdered for nothing more than trying to shine a light into some of the world's darkest corners. We remember the journalists unjustly imprisoned around the world, including our own Jason Rezaian. For 9 months, Jason has been imprisoned in Tehran for nothing more than writing about the hopes and the fears of the Iranian people, carrying their stories to the readers of the Washington Post in an effort to bridge our common humanity. As was already mentioned, Jason's brother Ali is here tonight, and I have told him personally we will not rest until we bring him home to his family, safe and sound.

These journalists and so many others view their work as more than just a profession, but as a public good, an indispensable pillar of our society. So I want to give a toast to them. I raise a glass to them and to all of you, with the words of the American foreign correspondent Dorothy Thompson: "It is not the fact of liberty, but the way in which liberty is exercised, that ultimately determines whether liberty itself survives."

[*The President offered a toast.*]

Thank you for your devotion to exercising our liberty and to telling our American story. God bless you. God bless the United States of America. Cheers!

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:20 p.m. at the Washington Hilton hotel. In his remarks, he referred to President Raúl Castro Ruz and former President Fidel Castro Ruz of Cuba; Rep. Joaquin Castro; Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Julián Castro; Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel; former Vice President Richard B. Cheney; former Gov. Michael D. Huckabee of Arkansas; former Gov. John E. "Jeb" Bush of Florida; former Sen. Richard J. Santorum; Donald J. Trump, chairman and chief executive officer, Trump Organization; Charles G. Koch, chief executive officer and chairman of the board, and David H. Koch, executive vice president, Koch Industries, Inc.; Gov. Scott K. Walker of Wisconsin; and former Gov. Martin J. O'Malley of Maryland. Comedian Keegan-Michael Key referred to actor Bradley C. Cooper; and Chuck Todd, chief White House correspondent, NBC News.

Message to the Senate Transmitting the Protocol to the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia
April 27, 2015

To the Senate of the United States:

I transmit herewith, for the advice and consent of the Senate to its ratification, the Protocol to the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia, signed at New York on May 6, 2014 (the "Protocol"). I also transmit for the information of the Senate the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia (the "Treaty") to which the Protocol relates, and the Department of State's Overview of the Protocol, which includes a detailed article-by-article analysis of both the Protocol and the Treaty.

Ratification of the Protocol is in the best interest of the United States, as it will enhance U.S. security by furthering our objective of preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons, strengthen our relations with the states and the people of Central Asia, demonstrate our commitment to the decision taken at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons that helped secure that Treaty's indefinite extension, and contribute significantly to the continued realization of the Central Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in all its aspects. As the Department of State's Overview of the Protocol explains, entry into force of the Protocol for the United States would require no changes in U.S. law, policy, or practice.

I recommend that the Senate give early and favorable consideration to the Protocol and give its advice and consent to its ratification, subject to the statements contained in the Department of State's Overview of the Protocol.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
April 27, 2015.

Remarks at a Welcoming Ceremony for Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan
April 28, 2015

President Obama. Good morning.

Audience members. Good morning.

President Obama. *Ohayo gozaimasu.*

Prime Minister Abe. *Ohayo gozaimasu.*

President Obama. On behalf of the American people and Michelle and myself, it is a great honor for me to welcome Prime Minister Abe and Mrs. Abe of Japan, one of America's closest allies in the world.

Across Japan over the coming days, our Japanese friends are marking special holidays: honoring their history, celebrating their constitution, giving gratitude for nature's beauty, and expressing their hopes for their children. And now, with this visit, it is a truly Golden Week.

For Michelle and myself, this is an opportunity to return the hospitality that Shinzo, Akie, and the Japanese people have shown us in the past. In Kyoto, Michelle had the honor of playing taiko drums. In Tokyo, I played soccer with ASIMO the robot. [*Laughter*]

This visit is a celebration of the ties of friendship and family that bind our peoples. I first felt it when I was 6 years old when my mother took me to Japan. I felt it growing up in Hawaii, like communities across our country, home to so many proud Japanese Americans.

Today is also a chance for Americans, especially our young people, to say thank you for all the things we love from Japan, like karate and karaoke—[*laughter*]—manga and anime and, of course, emojis. [*Laughter*]

And this visit also has historic significance. In 1960, President Eisenhower welcomed Prime Minister Abe's grandfather, Prime Minister Kishi, here to the White House. They signed the security treaty that endures to this

day, committing America and Japan to "an indestructible partnership."

Today we welcome Prime Minister Abe as we broaden our alliance for our time. The United States has renewed our leadership in the Asia-Pacific. Prime Minister Abe is leading Japan to a new role on the world stage. The foundation of both efforts is a strong U.S.-Japan alliance.

Ours is an alliance focused on the future: the security of our nations and the world, trade that is fair and free, and the equal opportunity and human rights of all people, around the world and in our countries as well, including women and girls, because they deserve to truly shine.

Prime Minister Abe, Mrs. Abe, members of the Japanese delegation, we are truly honored to have you here, as great allies and as true friends. Welcome to the United States. *Yokoso.*

Prime Minister Abe. Ohayo gozaimasu. Good morning.

[*At this point, Prime Minister Abe spoke in Japanese, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

Prime Minister Abe. Mr. President, Mrs. Obama, Mr. Vice President, Dr. Biden, ladies and gentlemen, I thank President Obama's warm welcome.

Two years ago, when I visited Washington, DC, it was in February, during the cold season of the year. I am honored to be back in this season when we can enjoy the beautiful season—[*laughter*]—South Lawn of the White House. And I'd like to express my appreciation for the cordial welcome from our American friends.

This official visit to the United States is a special one for me. Since I took office, the top priority of my foreign policy has been to revitalize the alliance between Japan and the United States. And here at Washington, DC, I had a summit meeting with President Obama 2 years ago, and since then, together with Mr. President, we have been addressing issues such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership and the realignment of U.S. forces.

And now our bilateral relationship is more robust than ever. Our alliance is back on track, and it is even stronger. This official visit is the culmination of what we have been doing for the past 2 years, and it is a great pleasure for me to realize this visit.

The development of Japan-U.S. relationship is not something we could achieve without the history of longstanding bilateral cooperation over the years. There have been the relationship of trusts between the leaders, the relationship of cooperation between the two nations and the governments, and friendship through people-to-people exchange between the two people. All these have played an important role as a key pillar for the relationship.

The world is facing numerous challenges more than ever. Japan will be at the forefront with the United States in addressing regional and global challenges while developing our bilateral ties with the United States in a consistent manner. And I very much look forward to having a discussion with President Obama today on those challenges.

Mr. President, Mrs. Obama, thank you again for the warm and cordial welcome as well as your hospitality.

[*Prime Minister Abe spoke in English as follows.*]

Thank you so much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:21 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House, where Prime Minister Abe was accorded a formal welcome with full military honors. In his remarks, Prime Minister Abe referred to Jill T. Biden, wife of Vice President Joe Biden.

The President's News Conference With Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan
April 28, 2015

President Obama. Good morning, everybody. Please have a seat. Good afternoon. *Konnichiwa.* Once again, it is an honor to welcome my partner and friend, Prime Minister Abe,

back to the White House. I'm told there's a phrase in Japanese culture that speaks to the spirit that brings us together today. It's an idea rooted in loyalty. It's an expression of mutuality, respect, and shared obligation. It transcends any specific moment or challenge. It's the foundation of a relationship that endures. It's what allows us to say that the United States and Japan stand together. *Otagai no tame ni*—"with and for each other."

This is the essence of the alliance between the United States and Japan, an alliance that holds lessons for the world. Prime Minister Abe and I had the opportunity yesterday to visit our memorial to President Lincoln, who believed that a great conflict had to be followed with reconciliation. Shinzo, on behalf of the American people, I want to thank you for your visit to Arlington National Cemetery. Your gesture is a powerful reminder that the past can be overcome, former adversaries can become the closest of allies, and that nations can build a future together.

Across seven decades, our nations have become not just allies, but true partners and friends. And that mutual affection will be on display tomorrow when Shinzo becomes the first Japanese Prime Minister to address a joint meeting of Congress. And we are two global partners that stand together for security and human dignity around the world: opposing Russia's aggression against Ukraine, providing relief to innocent civilians threatened by ISIL, combating Ebola and promoting global health and now offering help to the people of Nepal, who are in our prayers today.

This friendship includes my partnership with Prime Minister Abe. Since taking office, I've worked to rebalance American foreign policy to ensure that we're playing a larger and lasting role in the Asia-Pacific, a policy grounded in our treaty alliances, including our treaty with Japan. And I'm grateful to Shinzo for his deep commitment to that alliance. He is pursuing a vision of Japan where the Japanese economy is reinvigorated and where Japan makes greater contributions to security and peace in the region and around the world. So, Shinzo, thank you. I believe the progress we've made today will help to guide the U.S.-Japanese partnership for decades to come.

Specifically, we first talked about transforming our security alliance. For the first time in nearly two decades, we've updated the guidelines for our defense cooperation. Together, our forces will be more flexible and better prepared to cooperate on a range of challenges, from maritime security to disaster response. Our forces will plan, train, and operate even more closely. We'll expand our cooperation, including on cyber threats and in space. And Japan will take on greater roles and responsibilities in the Asia-Pacific and around the world.

Our new guidelines complement our effort to realign U.S. forces across the region, including on Okinawa, in order to lessen the impact of our bases on local communities. And I reaffirmed our commitment to move forward with the relocation of Marines from Okinawa to Guam.

I want to reiterate that our treaty commitment to Japan's security is absolute, and that article 5 covers all territories under Japan's administration, including Senkaku Islands. We share a concern about China's land reclamation and construction activities in the South China Sea, and the United States and Japan are united in our commitment to freedom of navigation, respect for international law, and the peaceful resolution of disputes without coercion.

We also remain united in pursuit of peaceful denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and addressing North Korean provocations. We fully support Japan's efforts to resolve the tragedy of North Korea's abduction of Japanese citizens. During my last visit to Japan, I met with the mother of one of those abductees, and she described the awful pain that she has endured, so I know how important this is to the Japanese people. Meanwhile, our growing trilateral cooperation—with the Republic of Korea, as well as with Australia—gives us new opportunities to enhance security across the region.

With respect to trade, we reviewed the progress our teams have made towards the Trans-Pacific Partnership. I know that the

politics around trade can be hard in both our countries. But I know that Prime Minister Abe, like me, is deeply committed to getting this done, and I'm confident we will. I often point out, for example, that there are many Japanese cars in America. I want to see more American cars in Japan as well. TPP will help level the playing field. It will be good for the workers of both our countries.

And moreover, TPP will have strong protections for workers and the environment and help us set high standards for trade in the 21st century. Japan and the United States both operate with high standards in our companies and our corporations. We try to be responsible when it comes to corporate citizenship. And high standards will be good for us and good for the region.

Based on the progress we've made, Prime Minister Abe and I discussed how the United States and Japan, as the two largest economies in the TPP negotiations, will now work together to lead our TPP partners to swift and successful conclusions of the broader negotiations.

We also agreed to continue our close coordination on climate change. As the two countries that have made the largest pledges to the Green Climate Fund, we're committed to helping nations around the world seize the opportunities of transitioning to low-carbon economies. And we discussed the importance of all major economies submitting ambitious targets to reduce emissions so we can reach a strong climate agreement this year in Paris.

And finally, we agreed to keep investing in our people so that they and our countries can reach their full potential. I want to once again commend the Prime Minister for his efforts to bring more Japanese women into the workforce. I can tell you, it is very much my view here in the United States and around the world that when women are given opportunity, when they are full-fledged members of the political community and the economic community, when they have opportunity, those countries succeed. It's good for everybody.

Along with the initiative we launched last year in Tokyo, we're also aiming to double student exchanges in the coming years. And with the leadership of our better halves—our wives—the United States and Japan are helping to lead our global initiative, "Let Girls Learn," to give more young women and girls access to education.

So these are just some examples of what it means to be true global partners. And I'm confident that with the steps that we've taken today, our alliance will play an even greater role in upholding security, prosperity, and human dignity, not just in the Asia-Pacific, but around the world.

So, Prime Minister Abe, *arigato gozaimasu.* Mr. Prime Minister.

Prime Minister Abe. Barack, thank you for inviting me to make an official visit in this commemorative year which marks 70 years after the war. Thank you for inviting me and my wife.

Walking together with you at the Lincoln Memorial, which has witnessed America tread the path of democracy, will be an extraordinary memory to be cherished. We have a dream: that is to create a world abound in peace and prosperity. To realize this common dream, Japan and the United States will together pave the way towards a new era.

I was able to confirm this strong resolve with President Obama in this milestone year of 70 years after the war. Today, we turned a new page in the history of the U.S.-Japan alliance, which exceeds half a century. This is a Japan-U.S. alliance within the context of the world. Japan and the United States are partners who share basic values, such as freedom, democracy, and basic human rights and the rule of law. The U.S.-Japan alliance characterized by the firmness of its bond is now indispensable to the peace and stability of not only the Asia-Pacific, but to the world.

We are united in our resoluteness in opposing unilateral attempts to change the status quo in whatever form. Any dispute should be resolved peacefully based on international law and not through coercion or intimidation. Japan welcomes the United States policy of rebalancing, which emphasizes the Asia-Pacific. And President Obama has expressed his support for Japan's principle of proactive contribu-

tion to peace. Through coordination of these two policies, the deterrence of our alliance will no doubt be further strengthened.

Against this backdrop, we have reaffirmed our resolve to steadily move forward with the realignment of the U.S. forces in Japan. The dangers arising from the Futenma Air Station being surrounded by housing and schools should be eliminated by relocation to Henoko as soon as possible. We will move forward with mitigating the impact of the base in Okinawa, founded on a strong relationship of trust between Japan and the United States. It is prosperity that brings peace. These beliefs makes us eager to see the early conclusion of the TPP.

On the bilateral outstanding issues, we welcome the fact that significant progress was made. We will continue to cooperate to lead the TPP talks through its last phase. We've confirmed that we would work together for the early and successful conclusion of the talks.

In addition, with regard to the situation in East Asia, abduction by North Korea, nuclear missile issues, the situation in the Ukraine, the nuclear issue in Iran, and the threat of terrorism; furthermore, climate change, infectious and communicable diseases, the U.N. Security Council reform—the world has a multitude of issues facing it. And on these all sorts of issues, we have had a frank and candid exchange of views, and we agreed that we would cooperate.

When it comes to the future of Japan and the United States, there are infinite possibilities: energy, infrastructure, science and technology, space, and in addition to this, the empowerment of women. We agree—that is, between President Obama and myself—that we would cooperate and move forward in making investments for the future.

I would like to express my due heartfelt respect once again to President Obama and the citizens of the United States who have committed to take on the multiple—multitude of challenges of this world and for the unstinting efforts that you are making for the benefit of the peoples of the world.

Yesterday I visited the JFK Library in Boston. On television, I saw President Kennedy deliver his Inauguration speech; it deeply resonated with me, and it still has a lingering effect. I recall the following quote: "My fellow citizens of the world, ask not what America will do for you, but what together we can do for the freedom of mankind."

Now, Japan wants to be a country that can respond to such calls. Hand in hand, we want to work together with the United States to spread basic values throughout the world such as those of freedom, democracy, basic human rights, and the rule of law. And we want to be a country that can contribute to peace and prosperity of the world.

In visiting the United States, I've had a very heartwarming welcome and reception by all citizens of the United States. I'd like to express my heartfelt gratitude.

Lastly, I'd like to emphasize the following. Barack, as we stand here, we will be starting a new era for Japan and the United States. I think that 70 years from now, our children and grandchildren will look back on the talks we had as one of such historical significance. Thank you very much.

President Obama. [*Inaudible*]—starting with Andrew Beatty of AFP.

Japan-U.S. Relations/China/South Korea

Q. Thank you very much, Mr. President. First of all, I wanted to know if you think there's a risk in this more assertive U.S.-Japanese security stance, if you think there's a risk that it might be seen as a provocation in Beijing, Pyongyang, or heightened tension in the East China and South China Seas.

And for Mr. Abe, if I may: You stopped short of a full apology for Japan's actions during World War II, including with regard the estimated 200,000 women enslaved by Imperial Forces. Would you make an apology for that today? Thank you.

President Obama. I think it's very important to recognize that the U.S.-Japan alliance hasn't just been good for the United States and Japan, it's been good for the Asia-Pacific region and the world. The basic foundation of peace, stability, ensuring that territorial borders were respected, freedom of navigation—all that has underwritten the incredible growth that's

taken place in the Asia-Pacific region. China has benefited from it. It's on that basis that China became an economic juggernaut that ended up being incorporated into global trade.

And so, no, we don't think that a strong U.S.-Japan alliance should be seen as a provocation. We should—it should be seen as a continuation of the important work that we've done to ensure that you have a stable area where there are diplomatic conflicts, a healthy economic competition, but largely, we've been able to maintain forward progress for a whole host of nations. And our treaty alliances have been critical to that. The U.S. serving as an Asia-Pacific power has been critical to that.

And as I've said before, we welcome China's peaceful rise. We think it's good not only because China is a booming potential market. We think it's good not only because it allows China potentially to share some burdens with us in helping countries that are not as far along develop. But we think it's just good that hundreds of millions of Chinese citizens have been able to rise out of poverty at incredible speed over the last several years. They could not have done that had it not been for a stable trading system and world order that is underwritten in large part by the work that our alliances do.

I think it is going to be important for us to continue to adapt to new challenges. So part of the goal here is that the same principles that the alliance was founded on continually update to concerns about cyber threats; that we are nimble and responsive to potential conflicts that may arise because of maritime disputes. But I think we have to do it in a way that brings in China and other countries into a common effort to maintain order and peace in the region.

And we are seeking to strengthen military-to-military cooperation with China even as we continue to upgrade our alliance efforts. Obviously, the Republic of Korea is a critical part of our alliance structure as well. And the trilateral work that we do is going to be also very, very important.

I don't want to minimize, though, the fact that there are some real tensions that have arisen with China around its approach to maritime issues and its claims. But that's not an issue that is arising as a consequence of the U.S.-Japan alliance. It's primarily a conflict between China and various claimants throughout East Asia and Southeast Asia in which they feel that rather than resolve these issues through normal international dispute settlements, they are flexing their muscles.

And we've said to China what we would say to any country in that circumstance: That's the wrong way to go about it. And we will continue to work with all countries in the region, starting with our treaty allies, to make sure that basic international norms continue to be observed.

Prime Minister Abe. On the issue of comfort women, I am deeply pained to think about the comfort women who experienced immeasurable pain and suffering as a result of victimization due to human trafficking. This is a feeling that I share equally with my predecessors. The Abe cabinet upholds the Kono statement and has no intention to revise it. Based on this position, Japan has made various efforts to provide realistic relief for the comfort women.

In—throughout the history of the 20th century, women's dignity and basic human rights had often been infringed upon during wars. We intend to make the 21st century a world with no human rights violations against women.

I promised at the General Assembly of the United Nations last year that Japan would stand at the fore and lead the international community in eliminating sexual violence during conflicts. For an international framework, including the U.N. Women, Japan provided approximately $12 million in 2014 and decided that it would provide approximately $22 million in 2015.

In any case, the 21st century should be an age where women's rights is never infringed upon. And it is—that is our strong resolve.

Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation/Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) Terrorist Organization/Japan's Defense Policy

Q. Thank you very much. [*Inaudible*]—from NHK. I'd like to address this question to Prime Minister Abe and President Obama. In the

East China Sea and in the South China Sea, China continues to make forays into the oceans. And the Islamic State is still very active. How does the United States and Japan intend to collaborate?

And what do you expect of each other in terms of actions taken by the respective countries? In Japan, with regard to the acceptance of exercise of collective self-defense and the new guidelines, there is a strong concern that Japan will become involved in America's wars. How does Prime Minister Abe intend to dispel those fears? And what is President Obama's take on these concerns?

Prime Minister Abe. First of all, on extremism and radicalism, which is on the rise, the world community should unite to counter such extremism. Moderation is the best method, is the speech I delivered in Cairo. We have to face extremism. There are moderates who are at the very forefront facing extremism, and we want to support this.

With the rise of extremism, there are refugees and support to these refugees. And also, through the influx of refugees, there are countries who are faced with difficulties. To these countries, it's important that we provide support appropriately. And to the moderate countries, we need to tell them that they are not alone, they are not isolated in the international society. The moderate countries should be supported, and we need to express that at all times. I believe that is important.

In the Middle East, there are people who are living there; improving the welfare and livelihood of these peoples are areas in which we'd like to make efforts. From such a standpoint, the United States and Japan would like to cooperate to respond to the challenges.

Another point. The defense guidelines and with regard to the security legislation that we may be involved, get caught up in wars—people tend to label this in some cases. It's very unfortunate. Labeling activities of this kind is not the first time it has occurred. In 1960, when we revised the security treaty, people—some people said that we would be involved in wars of the United States, and that was the core of the criticism which was aired then.

It's been 55 years since then. This criticism has been proved totally wrong, and that is very clear and evident. History has proved this. Our choice made at the time to revise the security treaty. And in case Japan suffers from aggression between Japan and the United States, we would respond through cooperation.

And in the Far East, to maintain security, Japan's facilities would be leveraged, and U.S. military would leverage these facilities to conduct activities. Through such activities, Japan's safety would be—was protected, and prosperity happened, and safety in Asian—the Asia-Pacific has been maintained.

To further strengthen this trend is provided for through the new guidelines, and seamless response is made possible. And by so doing, deterrence would be enhanced. Japan-U.S. alliance would be more efficient and more functional. Deterrence and response capabilities would be heightened as a result. And this would lead to peace and prosperity of Japan and regional peace and prosperity as well. This is my firm conviction.

In the streamlining of the laws, I should like to explain to the citizens—and the Parliament—in a detailed fashion.

President Obama. Ultimately, the people of Japan and their elected representatives will be making decisions about how best to approach their defense. But I think it's important to note, as Prime Minister Abe said, that we have seen over multiple decades now that Japan is a peace-loving country, having absorbed some very difficult lessons from the past; Japan does not engage in aggression on the international stage or in its region; and that the alliance that has been built with the United States is principally one that seeks to defend our countries from potential attack or aggression. And what the new defense guidelines and the collective defense approach that Prime Minister Abe is proposing simply upgrades our ability to carry out those core functions.

We do share, as people in countries all around the world share, a determination to eliminate the kind of barbaric terrorist acts perpetrated by organizations like ISIL that have resulted in the death of innocent citizens

from the United States, from Japan, from other countries, and most of all, from Muslim countries. And that's why we have a broad-based coalition designed to defeat ISIL. And we will continue to work with a wide range of countries around the world in our counterterrorism efforts.

Japan's cooperation in that is vital and appreciated, but there are many ways in which coalition members participate. Japan's willingness and commitment to provide humanitarian assistance makes an enormous difference in countries that have been destabilized. Japan's willingness to serve in areas of peacekeeping and working with other countries to rebuild after they've been destroyed makes a big difference.

So I think it's important to recognize we do not expect some instant and major transformation in terms of how Japan projects military power, but we do expect that Japan, like all of our allies and like ourselves, will continue to adapt to new threats, understanding that our basic core principle is not territorial ambition, it's not aggression towards others, but it is simply to defend prosperity and liberty and the sovereignty of countries, as we have done for a very long time now, as we have done together for a very long time.

Chris Jansing [NBC News].

Trans-Pacific Partnership/Civil Unrest in Baltimore, Maryland/Community-Oriented Policing/Criminal Justice Reform/Poverty/Economic Development

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. As you know, the National Guard is now on the streets of Baltimore, the latest aftermath in a series of what have been high-profile confrontations between Black men and police officers. And there seems to be growing frustration among African American leaders that not enough is being done quickly enough. Marc Morial of the Urban League said, "The U.S. is in a state of emergency of tremendous proportions." The president of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund says, "We are in the throes of a national crisis."

Are we in the throes of a national crisis? What are you prepared to do about it, both in terms of Baltimore and the larger picture? And what do you say to critics who say that since the death of Trayvon Martin, you have not been aggressive enough in your response?

And to Prime Minister Abe, how important is a Pacific trade deal to keeping the influence of China in check, both economically and militarily? And do you agree with President Obama when he says that failing to complete a deal will simply further China's influence? Thank you.

President Obama. Before I answer the question about Baltimore, I'm going to horn in on your question to Prime Minister Abe.

I've been very clear that TPP is good for American businesses and American workers, regardless of what China is doing. And we will make the case on the merits as to why it will open up markets for American goods, American exports, and create American jobs. So this is not simply a defensive agreement, this is something that is going to be part and parcel of our broader economic agenda moving forward. And when 95 percent of the world's markets are outside our shores, we've got to make sure that we're out there competing. And I'm confident we can compete.

With respect to Baltimore, let me make a couple of points. First, obviously, our thoughts continue to be with the family of Freddie Gray. Understandably, they want answers. And DOJ has opened an investigation. It is working with local law enforcement to find out exactly what happened, and I think there should be full transparency and accountability.

Second, my thoughts are with the police officers who were injured in last night's disturbances. It underscores that that's a tough job, and we have to keep that in mind, and my hope is that they can heal and get back to work as soon as possible.

Point number three: There's no excuse for the kind of violence that we saw yesterday. It is counterproductive. When individuals get crowbars and start prying open doors to loot, they're not protesting, they're not making a statement. They're stealing. When they burn down a building, they're committing arson. And they're destroying and undermining businesses

and opportunities in their own communities that rob jobs and opportunity from people in that area.

So it is entirely appropriate that the mayor of Baltimore, who I spoke to yesterday, and the Governor, who I spoke to yesterday, work to stop that kind of senseless violence and destruction. That is not a protest. That is not a statement. It's people—a handful of people—taking advantage of a situation for their own purposes, and they need to be treated as criminals.

Point number four: The violence that happened yesterday distracted from the fact that you had seen multiple days of peaceful protests that were focused on entirely legitimate concerns of these communities in Baltimore, led by clergy and community leaders. And they were constructive, and they were thoughtful, and frankly, it didn't get that much attention. And one burning building will be looped on television over and over and over again, and the thousands of demonstrators who did it the right way, I think, have been lost in the discussion.

The overwhelming majority of the community in Baltimore, I think, have handled this appropriately, expressing real concern and outrage over the possibility that our laws were not applied evenly in the case of Mr. Gray and that accountability needs to exist. And I think we have to give them credit. My understanding is, is you've got some of the same organizers now going back into these communities to try to clean up in the aftermath of a handful of protesters—a handful of criminals and thugs who tore up the place. What they were doing, what those community leaders and clergy and others were doing, that is a statement. That's the kind of organizing that needs to take place if we're going to tackle this problem. And they deserve credit for it, and we should be lifting them up.

Point number five—and I've got six—[*laughter*]—because this is important: Since Ferguson and the Task Force that we put together, we have seen too many instances of what appears to be police officers interacting with individuals—primarily African American, often poor—in ways that have raised troubling questions. And it comes up, it seems like, once a week now, or once every couple of weeks. And so I think it's pretty understandable why the leaders of civil rights organizations, but more importantly, moms and dads across the country, might start saying this is a crisis. What I'd say is, this has been a slow-rolling crisis. This has been going on for a long time. This is not new, and we shouldn't pretend that it's new.

The good news is, is that perhaps there's some newfound awareness because of social media and video cameras and so forth that there are problems and challenges when it comes to how policing and our laws are applied in certain communities, and we have to pay attention to it and respond.

What's also good news is, the Task Force that was made up of law enforcement and community activists that we brought together here in the White House have come up with very constructive concrete proposals that, if adopted by local communities and by States and by counties, by law enforcement generally, would make a difference. It wouldn't solve every problem, but would make a concrete difference in rebuilding trust and making sure that the overwhelming majority of effective, honest, and fair law enforcement officers, that they're able to do their job better because it will weed out or retrain or put a stop to those handful who may be not doing what they're supposed to be doing.

Now, the challenge for us, as the Federal Government is, is that we don't run these police forces. I can't federalize every police force in the country and force them to retrain. But what I can do is to start working with them collaboratively so that they can begin this process of change themselves.

And we—coming out of the Task Force that we put together, we're now working with local communities. The Department of Justice has just announced a grant program for those jurisdictions that want to purchase body cameras. We are going to be issuing grants for those jurisdictions that are prepared to start trying to implement some of the new training and data collection and other things that can make a

difference. And we're going to keep on working with those local jurisdictions so that they can begin to make the changes that are necessary.

I think it's going to be important for organizations like the Fraternal Order of Police and other police unions and organizations to acknowledge that this is not good for police. We have to own up to the fact that occasionally there are going to be problems here, just as there are in every other occupation. There are some bad politicians who are corrupt. There are folks in the business community or on Wall Street who don't do the right thing. Well, there's some police who aren't doing the right thing. And rather than close ranks, what we've seen is, a number of thoughtful police chiefs and commissioners and others recognize, they've got to get their arms around this thing and work together with the community to solve the problem. And we're committed to facilitating that process.

So the heads of our COPS agency that helps with community policing, they're already out in Baltimore. Our head—Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division is already out in Baltimore. But we're going to be working systematically with every city and jurisdiction around the country to try to help them implement some solutions that we know work.

And I'll make my final point. I'm sorry, Mr. Prime Minister, but this is a pretty important issue for us.

We can't just leave this to the police. I think there are police departments that have to do some soul searching. I think there are some communities that have to do some soul searching. But I think we, as a country, have to do some soul searching. This is not new. It's been going on for decades.

And without making any excuses for criminal activities that take place in these communities, what we also know is that if you have impoverished communities that have been stripped away of opportunity, where children are born into abject poverty; they've got parents—often because of substance abuse problems or incarceration or lack of education themselves—can't do right by their kids; if it's more likely that those kids end up in jail or dead than that they go to college; in communities where there are no fathers who can provide guidance to young men; communities that—where there's no investment and manufacturing has been stripped away and drugs have flooded the community and the drug industry ends up being the primary employer for a whole lot of folks—in those environments, if we think that we're just going to send the police to do the dirty work of containing the problems that arise there without, as a nation and as a society, saying, "What can we do to change those communities, to help lift up those communities and give those kids opportunity?," then we're not going to solve this problem. And we'll go through the same cycles of periodic conflicts between the police and communities and the occasional riots in the streets, and everybody will feign concern until it goes away, and then we go about our business as usual.

If we are serious about solving this problem, then we're going to not only have to help the police, we're going to have to think about what can we do—the rest of us—to make sure that we're providing early education to these kids; to make sure that we're reforming our criminal justice system so it's not just a pipeline from schools to prisons; so that we're not rendering men in these communities unemployable because of a felony record for a nonviolent drug offense; that we're making investments so that they can get the training they need to find jobs. That's hard. That requires more than just the occasional news report or Task Force. And there's a bunch of my agenda that would make a difference right now in that.

Now, I'm under no illusion that out of this Congress we're going to get massive investments in urban communities, and so we'll try to find areas where we can make a difference around school reform and around job training and around some investments in infrastructure in these communities and trying to attract new businesses in.

But if we really want to solve the problem, if our society really wanted to solve the problem, we could. It's just, it would require everybody

saying this is important, this is significant, and that we don't just pay attention to these communities when a CVS burns and we don't just pay attention when a young man gets shot or has his spine snapped. We're paying attention all the time because we consider those kids our kids and we think they're important and they shouldn't be living in poverty and violence.

That's how I feel. I think there are a lot of good-meaning people around the country that feel that way. But that kind of political mobilization, I think, we haven't seen in quite some time. And what I've tried to do is to promote those ideas that would make a difference. But I think we all understand that the politics of that are tough, because it's easy to ignore those problems or to treat them just as a law-and-order issue, as opposed to a broader social issue.

That was a really long answer, but I felt pretty strongly about it.

Prime Minister Abe. First of all, on TPP, this is not something that we create out of consciousness about China. The economic growth of the region will be a positive and create opportunities for Japan, the United States, and the world. The TPP is such that to the eyes of many countries, it has to become a model. It should be a model for China in that it's an ambitious attempt to create a new economic sphere in which people, goods, and money will flow freely within the Asia-Pacific region. It's a new economic region of freedom, democracy, basic human rights, and rule of law.

With countries that share these universal values, we will be creating new rules. And this will benefit regional prosperity, and it also has a strategic significance related to regional stability.

On these points, we see completely eye to eye between President Obama and myself. The early conclusion of TPP, by achieving this, this will work on other countries—nonmembers of the TPP—to follow rules. And I believe that this will lead to prosperity.

Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank/Trans-Pacific Partnership

Q. [*Inaudible*]—from Kyoto Press. My question addressed—is addressed to Prime Minister Abe, as well as President Obama. In relation to the answer that has been given, China is working toward the establishment of the AIIB, and it intends to enhance its influence in the international economy and finance. What is the strategic significance of the early conclusion of the TPP?

And the next question is to President Obama. Do you have confidence, or how do you intend to work on Congress to pass the TPP-related bills? And how confident are you that you'll be able to pass this bill?

Prime Minister Abe. On the TPP, as I mentioned in my answer previously, in the Asia-Pacific region, this is a region where growth is very prominent. And in such a region, for people and goods and money under proper rules to flow freely, without a doubt, will make affluent the countries participating in the TPP, in the Asia-Pacific. And the people in the countries will be able to lead affluent lives. I believe this will feed into this.

So for this purpose as well, as soon as possible, with the general public's understanding, toward early conclusion of the TPP, we'd like to make efforts. And in this context, Japan and the United States—or with President Barack Obama and myself—we want to exert leadership to bring about an early conclusion of the TPP.

Furthermore, on the AIIB, in Asia there's a tremendous demand for infrastructure, and the financial system to respond to this is very important. On this recognition, we see eye to eye between China and myself, and I think this is a point on which we see eye to eye between many countries.

For Japan to participate in the AIIB is a decision that which we have not taken yet. But to create such an enormous financial institution and since this will have an enormous impact on Asian countries, a fair governance is necessary of the institution. In particular, the board to review individual projects and to approve of this is indispensable. And that sustainability and the environment and society and the impact of this should be considered. We need to secure this.

It's not only about the lenders, but the borrowing nations. For example, various infrastructure projects may not be sustainable. It may have too much of a burden on the environment. If this is the case, this will be a very negative—bring negative results for the citizens living in the countries. It will prove to be a burden. And so in that sense, a proper review as to whether lending the money to a country will be of benefit to the country. Rigorous review is very important.

So, from such a standpoint, the two points to be secured, I believe, is very important. So from such a standpoint, Japan and the United States should cooperate, and we need to continue dialogue with China, and it is my intention to do so.

President Obama. Let me agree with Prime Minister Abe when it comes to the Asian Infrastructure Bank proposal that's been made by China.

Asia needs infrastructure. There are a lot of countries that have difficulty financing infrastructure, but if they got that infrastructure put in place and developed, they can grow much more rapidly. And that's good for everybody. It's good for that country. It's good for the world economy. It's good for us. We want more markets to be able to get our goods in and sell our services that are some of the best in the world. And China has got a lot of money. It's been running a big surplus for quite some time. So to the extent that China wants to put capital into development projects around the region, that's a positive. That's a good thing.

So let me be very clear and dispel this notion that we were opposed or are opposed to other countries participating in the Asia Infrastructure Bank. That is simply not true. It sprung up out of one story after the Brits decided that they were going to join up, and then folks have just been running with it. And there have been all these editorials subsequently based on these reports, not from any official position of the United States Government, but from a series of behind-the-scenes quotes.

What we have said and what we've said to all the other countries involved is exactly what Prime Minister Abe said, which is, if we're going to have a multilateral lending institution, then you have to have some guidelines by which it's going to operate. That's how the World Bank operates. That's how the IMF operates. There may be weighted votes in terms of who's the biggest contributor, but you've got to have some transparency in terms of how the thing is going to operate, because if not, a number of things can happen. Number one, money could end up flowing that is misused, or it doesn't have high accounting standards, and we don't know what happens to money that is going into projects.

As Prime Minister Abe said, the projects themselves may not be well designed. They may be very good for the leaders of some countries and contractors, but may not be good for the actual people who live there. And the reason I can say that is because, in the past, some of the efforts of multilateral institutions that the United States set up didn't always do right by the actual people in those countries. And we learned some lessons from that, and we got better at making sure that we were listening to the community and thinking about how this would affect the environment and whether it was sustainable.

And so our simple point to everybody in these conversations around the Asia Infrastructure Bank is, let's just make sure that we're running it based on best practices, based on what we've learned from the entire postwar era and how other multilateral financing mechanisms have worked.

And if in fact the Asia Infrastructure Bank that is being set up ends up having those kinds of safeguards, is run in a way that ultimately is actually going to lead to good infrastructure and benefit the borrowing countries, then we're all for it. And we look forward to collaborating with the Asia Infrastructure Bank, just like we do with the Asia Development Bank and with the World Bank on a whole bunch of stuff. So this could be a positive thing.

But if it's not run well, then it could be a negative thing. And what we don't want to do is just be participating in something and providing cover for an institution that does not end up doing right by its people. Because when

these countries borrow money, even from a development bank, for a boondoggle project that doesn't work, they're oftentimes still on the hook for paying that money back. And there have been experiences like that across continents and across decades.

With respect to TPP, it's never fun passing a trade bill in this town and—because people are understandably concerned about its potential impacts on specific industries, but also the general concerns that people have had about globalization and technology displacing workers. We're addressing those systematically. Here's what I'm confident about: This will end up being the most progressive trade bill in history. It will have the kinds of labor and environmental and human rights protections that have been absent in previous agreements. It's going to be enforceable. It's going to open up markets that currently are not fully open to U.S. businesses. It's going to be good for the U.S. economy.

And because I always believe that good policy ends up being good politics, I'm confident we're going to end up getting the votes in Congress. And Congress, by the way, will have a lot of time to review it when and if it's actually completed. So this whole notion that it's all secret, they're going to have 60 days before I even sign it to look at the text and then a number of months after that before they have to take a final vote.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 12:10 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to Sakie Yokota, mother of Megumi Yokota, a Japanese citizen who was abducted by North Korean authorities in 1977; Akie Abe, wife of Prime Minister Abe; Freddie C. Gray, Jr., who died on April 19 as a result of injuries sustained following an arrest by Baltimore, MD, police officers on April 12; Mayor Stephanie C. Rawlings-Blake of Baltimore, MD; Gov. Lawrence J. Hogan, Jr., of Maryland; Ronald L. Davis, Director, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS); and Acting Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights Vanita Gupta. A reporter referred to Marc H. Morial, president and chief executive officer, National Urban League; and Sherrilyn Ifill, president and director-counsel, NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. Prime Minister Abe and two reporters spoke in Japanese, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Joint Statement by President Obama and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan on the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
April 28, 2015

1. Japan and the United States reaffirm our commitment to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons and to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). We commit to work together for a successful Review Conference in New York that strengthens each of the Treaty's three pillars: nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation, and peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The NPT remains the cornerstone of the global non-proliferation regime and an essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament. In this 70th year since the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, we are reminded of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons use. Hiroshima and Nagasaki will be forever engraved in the world's memory. Concerns over the use of nuclear weapons underpin all work to reduce nuclear dangers and to work toward nuclear disarmament, to which all NPT parties are committed under Article VI of the Treaty. We affirm that it is in the interest of all States that the 70-year record of non-use should be extended forever and remain convinced that all States share the responsibility for achieving this goal.

2. We reaffirm our commitment to a step-by-step approach to nuclear disarmament, and recognize the progress made since the height of the Cold War. We recognize that further

progress is needed. Immediate next steps should include further negotiated nuclear reductions between the United States and Russia, the immediate start of multilateral negotiations of a Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty, entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the protocols to the existing nuclear weapon free zone treaties, and the continued reduction of all types of nuclear weapons, deployed and non-deployed, including through unilateral, bilateral, regional and multilateral measures. We further emphasize the importance of applying the principles of irreversibility, verifiability and transparency in the process of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. In this regard, the United States welcomes Japan's leadership in the Non-proliferation and Disarmament Initiative and Japan's role as the Co-Chair Country for the Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the CTBT, and Japan welcomes the U.S. initiative to launch the International Partnership on Nuclear Disarmament Verification. We affirm our readiness to cooperate closely on this new initiative, which will facilitate further cooperation between the nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States with respect to nuclear disarmament efforts.

3. We further note the positive role played by civil society, and hope that activities such as the UN Conference on Disarmament Issues and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty's Group of Eminent Persons Meeting, both to be held in Hiroshima in August, and the Pugwash Conference to be held in Nagasaki in November, will strengthen momentum toward disarmament and non-proliferation.

4. We unequivocally support access to nuclear technology and energy for peaceful purposes by states that comply with their non-proliferation obligations. We are especially pleased to announce that both the United States and Japan which strongly support the role of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in promoting the benefits of the peaceful uses of nuclear technology have pledged to extend their financial support to the IAEA Peaceful Uses Initiative over the next five years. The U.S. pledge of $50 million and Japan's pledge of $25 million will ensure that applications of nuclear science and technology continue to advance medical care and health improvement including cancer treatment and Ebola diagnosis, food and water security, clean oceans and disease eradication in regions of the world most in need.

5. The IAEA safeguards system is a fundamental element of that framework and plays a critical role in preventing and addressing challenges to the global non-proliferation regime, by verifying that states are not diverting peaceful nuclear energy programs to develop weapons, and by responding to cases of non-compliance. We call on all states that have not yet done so to adhere to a Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement and the Additional Protocol as the recognized IAEA safeguards standard, and renew our willingness to assist states to implement safeguards agreements. We support the evolution of IAEA safeguards at the State level, and emphasize the importance of maintaining the credibility, effectiveness and integrity of the IAEA safeguards system. To preserve the future integrity of the NPT, action is needed to discourage any state from withdrawing from the Treaty as a way to escape its responsibilities or to misuse the fruits of peaceful cooperation with other states, as well as to encourage States Parties to remain in the Treaty by demonstrating tangible progress in all three pillars of the Treaty.

6. We underscore the imperative of addressing challenges to the integrity of the NPT and the non-proliferation regime posed by cases of noncompliance. We welcome the EU/E3+3 deal with Iran and encourage completion of the work that remains to fully resolve the international community's concerns regarding the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear program as well as to ensure that Iran does not acquire nuclear weapons. We also remain committed to a diplomatic process to achieve North Korea's complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization. We urge North Korea to take concrete steps to honor its commitments under the 2005 Joint Statement of the Six-Party Talks, fully comply with its obligations under the relevant UNSC Resolutions,

refrain from further provocation including nuclear tests and ballistic missile launches, return to the NPT and IAEA safeguards, and come into full compliance with its nonproliferation obligations.

7. We also underscore the importance of promoting stringent export control in Asia and globally. We are determined to continue to work together to conduct outreach activities for Asian countries with a view to further enhancing their export control capacity as well as to promoting recognition that rigorous export controls foster confidence of trade or investment partners, and create a favorable environment for further economic growth rather than impeding trade and investment.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Joint Statement—U.S.-Japan Joint Vision Statement
April 28, 2015

Today the United States and Japan honor a partnership that for seven decades has made enduring contributions to global peace, security, and prosperity. In this year which marks 70 years since the end of World War II, the relationship between our two countries stands as a model of the power of reconciliation: former adversaries who have become steadfast allies and who work together to advance common interests and universal values in Asia and globally. Together we have helped to build a strong rules-based international order, based on a commitment to rules, norms and institutions that are the foundation of global affairs and our way of life.

This transformation into a robust alliance and global partnership was not inevitable. Generations of people from all walks of life built the relationship between our countries over time, working in the belief that the experiences of the past should inform but not constrain the possibilities for the future. This endeavor has brought the United States and Japan to where we stand today: two of the world's leading economies, advancing regional prosperity through a mutually beneficial economic partnership, anchored by an unshakeable Alliance that is the cornerstone of peace and security in the Asia-Pacific region and a platform for global cooperation. The journey our two countries have traveled demonstrates that reconciliation is possible when all sides are devoted to achieving it.

Over the past 70 years, the U.S.-Japan relationship has successfully grown and adapted to challenges and significant changes in the international system. Together we helped to win the Cold War and manage its aftermath; we have worked together to fight terrorism after the September 11, 2001 attacks; we cooperated to strengthen the international financial architecture following the global financial crisis; we responded to natural disasters such as the tragic Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami of March 11, 2011; we have confronted North Korean nuclear and missile threats, as well as human rights abuses and abductions; we have worked together to address concerns about Iran's nuclear program; and we have cooperated to address complex transnational challenges.

Today's meeting between President Obama and Prime Minister Abe marks a historic step forward in transforming the U.S.-Japan partnership. Through the United States' Asia-Pacific Rebalance strategy, and Japan's policy of "Proactive Contribution to Peace" based on the principle of international cooperation, we are working closely together to ensure a peaceful and prosperous future for the region and the world. We recognize that the security and prosperity of our two countries in the 21st century is intertwined, inseparable, and not defined solely by national borders. Our current and future commitments to each other and to the international order reflect that reality.

The United States and Japan are committed to a transparent, rules-based, and progressive approach in pursuing the prosperity of the region. Our leadership in this area encompasses

trade and investment through the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), development cooperation, and internet governance. The United States and Japan are leading efforts to set the rules for trade and investment, both in the dynamic and fast-growing Asia-Pacific region and around the world. As the two largest economies in TPP, we are working to finalize the most high-standard trade agreement ever negotiated. TPP will drive economic growth and prosperity in both countries and throughout the Asia-Pacific region by supporting more jobs, raising wages, and reinforcing our work together on a range of long term strategic objectives, including the promotion of regional peace and stability. We welcome the significant progress that has been made in the bilateral negotiations and reaffirm our commitment to work together to achieve a swift and successful conclusion to the broader agreement.

The new Guidelines for U.S-Japan Defense Cooperation will transform the Alliance, reinforce deterrence, and ensure that we can address security challenges, new and old, for the long term. The new Guidelines will update our respective roles and missions within the Alliance and enable Japan to expand its contributions to regional and global security. The new Guidelines will enable us to work more closely on issues including maritime security, and to partner with other countries that share our aspirations, in the region and beyond. As we strengthen an Alliance that has become global in reach, the United States stands resolute and unwavering in all of its commitments under the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty, based upon a stable, long-term U.S. military presence in Japan.

The United States and Japan are building a partnership that addresses global challenges. Our agenda is broad: we will work together to address climate change and environmental degradation, one of the greatest threats facing humanity; to further strengthen our economies and to promote strong, sustainable and balanced global growth; to deliver secure, affordable, sustainable and safe energy; to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development; to promote human security; to counter violent extremism; to strengthen the NPT regime to achieve the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons; to promote global trade and investment; to combat epidemics and threats to global health; to advance scientific inquiry and promote resilience in space; to ensure the safe and stable use of cyber space based on the free flow of information and an open internet; to promote disaster risk reduction and relieve those afflicted by natural disasters and humanitarian emergencies; to advance human rights and universal freedoms; to promote girls education and empower women and girls around the world; and to strengthen U.N. peacekeeping. The United States looks forward to a reformed U.N. Security Council that includes Japan as a permanent member. Seventy years ago this partnership was unimaginable. Today it is a fitting reflection of our shared interests, capabilities and values.

As we work to expand our global cooperation, we will be guided by shared principles:

- Respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity;
- Commitment to the peaceful resolution of disputes without coercion;
- Support for democracy, human rights, and the rule of law;
- Expansion of economic prosperity, through open markets, free trade, transparent rules and regulations, and high labor and environmental standards;
- Promotion of globally recognized norms of behavior in shared domains, including the freedom of navigation and overflight, based upon international law;
- Advancement of strong regional and global institutions; and
- Support for trilateral and multilateral cooperation among like-minded partners.

Today the international order faces fresh challenges, ranging from violent extremism to cyber attacks. State actions that undermine respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity by attempting to unilaterally change the status quo by force or coercion pose challenges to the

international order. Such threats put at risk much that we have built. We must and will adapt again, working in concert with other allies and partners. But we also have before us exciting opportunities to raise our collaboration to a new level, in areas like science and technology, energy, infrastructure, and arts and culture. The spirit of innovation and entrepreneurship in these and other areas, supported by public-private collaboration, will continue to be the driving force of economic growth and prosperity in our two countries. The benefits of our work in these diverse fields will be global in reach. As we move forward, we will actively promote people-to-people exchange as a key pillar of our relationship, especially among younger generations. We take up these challenges and opportunities, knowing that the strength and resilience of our 70-year partnership will ensure our success in the decades ahead.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Remarks at a State Dinner Honoring Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan
April 28, 2015

President Obama. Well, Michelle and I are honored to welcome you to the White House as we host our friends, Prime Minister and Mrs. Abe, and as we celebrate the enduring alliance and great friendship between the United States and Japan.

I want to begin by paying tribute to two leaders in their own right, and I know Shinzo agrees: two women who are passionate about the causes they believe in, who speak their minds, who are better dancers than us—[*laughter*]—and an inspiration to so many women and girls, including the students they met today. And I have to say, the First Lady is more responsible for the beautiful room tonight than I am. So thank you, Michelle and Akie.

On my last visit to Tokyo, the Prime Minister and I went to what is reputed to be the best sushi place in Tokyo. [*Laughter*] And I have to confess that you could not have the sushi if you did not have some excellent sake to go with it. [*Laughter*] Michelle just revealed that today, on her recent visit to Tokyo, she and Mrs. Abe also indulged in sake. So tonight we're breaking with tradition a little bit and serving sake from Shinzo's home Prefecture of Yamaguchi. And please enjoy yourselves, but not too much. [*Laughter*]

It's appropriate that we have a Japanese theme to our dinner this evening. This morning I mentioned the Japanese Americans who were such important friends and parts of my community in my youth in Hawaii. And tonight I'm thinking about one of them in particular, a man who called himself Freddy, who ran a small market near our house. And he became great friend of my grandfather's. And part of the reason he was such a great friend is because he saved us the best cuts of tuna and toro for sashimi, and then, he'd also slip in some rice candy with edible wrappers, which was fascinating to me as a child. [*Laughter*] And they were small gestures, but they always remained with me as an example of how Japanese culture was woven into my upbringing and spoke to the ties of friendship and family that bring us here together tonight.

In 1957, Shinzo's grandfather, Prime Minister Kishi, addressed our Senate and our House of Representatives. He said that he hoped his visit would lead to "a strong and enduring partnership that will open the door to a new era of Japanese-American relations." Tomorrow his grandson will continue to carry our partnership forward when he makes history as the first Japanese Prime Minister to address a joint meeting of Congress.

So in honor of this historic occasion, I want to welcome all of you outstanding leaders from our two countries. You represent the friendship and the bonds that we carry forward into this new century. And in celebration of the progress that we've achieved today, I'm going to attempt a haiku. [*Laughter*] Here goes:

> Spring, green, and friendship
> United States and Japan
> *Nagoyaka ni!*

——which means "harmonious feeling." That's certainly how I feel. I am sure that I'm the first President ever to recite a haiku. [*Laughter*] Basho has nothing to worry about.

With that, let me propose a toast, with some sake. Be careful, people. [*Laughter*] To our guests, Prime Minister Abe and Mrs. Abe, to the friendship between our two peoples, and to our magnificent alliance. It does so much not just for our two countries, but for peace and prosperity in the world. May it endure for all seasons and all time. Cheers! *Kanpai!*

[*At this point, President Obama offered a toast.*]

Let me present to you the Prime Minister of Japan, Shinzo Abe.

Prime Minister Abe. Mr. President, Mrs. Obama, ladies and gentlemen, let me start by thanking you for arranging this wonderful dinner tonight. During my visit to Washington, DC, last time, I declared the revival of the alliance between Japan and the United States. Two years have passed since then, and Japan is now regaining its resilience and will continue our path together with the United States.

Today Barack and I had an excellent summit meeting in the morning. On the occasion, both of us reaffirmed how robust the alliance is and issued a joint vision statement taking into account the path of the alliance for the past 70 years, since the end of World War II. This was an extremely meaningful achievement. By working hand in hand with President Obama, we, the two nations, will continuously make proactive contribution to global peace and prosperity.

Tomorrow I will address a joint session of U.S. Congress for the first time as Japanese Prime Minister. Taking that opportunity, I would like to send out a strong message that both Japan and the United States, which once fought with each other, now achieved reconciliation; and that we will make contribution to addressing challenges that mankind faces.

I have to confess that the day before yesterday, and yesterday, I was seriously practicing the speech that I'm going to give at the joint session tomorrow. But my wife unfortunately told me that she is getting tired of listening to the speech. [*Laughter*] So last night we ended up in a separate room. [*Laughter*]

Ladies and gentlemen, the current Japan-U.S. alliance shows extremely close ties, forming a foundation for our economic growth and economic prosperity. For instance, Japan's Kawasaki Rail Car built new metro rail parts in Nebraska, which run through Washington, DC. Boeing 787 is flying everywhere in the world. And guess what, more than a third of its parts were made in Japan. Barack, you are an enthusiastic fan of sushi. And last, but not least, I have to confess something about myself too. I am one of the hardcore fans of the American TV drama, "House of Cards." [*Laughter*] But I would like to draw your attention to my commitment that I am not going to show this "House of Cards" to my fellow minister, Deputy Prime Minister. [*Laughter*] In any case, you won't find another bilateral relationship like ours.

Mr. President, Mrs. Obama, ladies and gentlemen, when the United States stands up to fight against various challenges of the world, and when Barack stands at the forefront to tackle with the variety of global challenges, you will not be alone. Next to you, there is always Japan. Japan has been and will be always standing side by side with the United States in addressing global challenges, such as the outbreak of the Ebola disease and climate change.

The partnership between Japan and the United States is simply unparalleled in building the future of Asia and the world. I know everyone here knows that famous song by Diana Ross, "Ain't No Mountain High Enough." The songs goes, "Ain't no mountain high enough; ain't no valley low enough to keep me from you." [*Laughter*] The relationship of Japan and the United States is just like this. [*Laughter*]

So with that, I'd like to propose a toast, and also I'd like to acknowledge First Lady, Mrs. Obama, for choosing the sake from Yamaguchi, where I am from.

Last year, when Barack visited Japan, we went to a very, very popular sushi restaurant. And because of the facts that the two leaders enjoyed—ordered sushi, now they become

more and more popular in Japan. But there was slight—one problem that involved in this arrangement of sushi dinner together with Barack. I actually prepared one brand of sake from Hiroshima, not my district. This was actually arranged by the Minister of Foreign Affairs. And probably because of the fact that the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Minister Kishida is from Hiroshima, he intentionally chose a brand from Hiroshima instead of Yamaguchi. And because of that selection, I got so much pressure and criticism from the local people in Yamaguchi that I actually could share this wonderful story with Mrs. Obama when she visited Japan. So probably because of that selection before last year, maybe Mrs. Obama intentionally chose the brand of Yamaguchi just for this occasion.

So with that, I'd like to note the kind consideration of First Lady, Mrs. Obama, and also I'd like to acknowledge the help that I always receive from my wife Akie. And I'd like to propose a toast for good health and prosperity, as well as the further development of the Japan-U.S. relationship tonight. *Kanpai!*

President Obama. Kanpai!

[*Prime Minister Abe offered a toast.*]

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:14 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, Prime Minister Abe referred to Deputy Prime Minister Taro Aso of Japan. Prime Minister Abe spoke in Japanese, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 29.

Remarks Honoring the 2015 National Teacher of the Year and State Teachers of the Year

April 29, 2015

Welcome to the White House, everybody. Please have a seat. This is one of my favorite days because it gives us a chance to acknowledge some folks who so often are giving so much and, let's face it, aren't always getting a lot in return. [*Laughter*] Every day, the teachers behind me, they give their students their all: their knowledge, their creativity, their focused attention, their love. They empty the tanks for their kids. Then, they get up the next morning, and they do it all over again.

And today is our chance to say thank you, to let these educators know that we see how hard they work, we know the difference they make in their students' lives. And they are, at the same time, making an incredible difference in the life of our country. Today is a chance to reaffirm how important teachers are to our Nation, not just these teachers, but all teachers.

And we are joined by somebody who is as passionate about our teachers and our students as anybody I know, and that is our outstanding Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan. I want to thank all the school leaders who are here today, because it takes leadership at every level, from principal all the way up to superintendent, to give our students the best chance to succeed.

Because of teachers like these, our classrooms are full of future doctors learning how muscle groups and organs work and future poets discovering Langston Hughes and Emily Dickinson, future scientists who are tinkering with microscopes and circuit boards. Future entrepreneurs are getting the hang of collaboration and problem-solving. Future leaders are learning what it means to be a citizen and how the ideals of freedom and justice made our country what we are today.

So America's future is written in our classrooms. We all depend on our teachers, whether we have kids in the schools or not. They deserve our support and our appreciation. And they also probably deserve higher salaries. [*Laughter*] I thought I'd editorialize a little bit. [*Laughter*] Ad lib. That's what today is all about.

Here with us are 55 of America's top teachers, from as far away as Alaska and American Samoa, and as close as Maryland and Washington,

DC. They teach everything from math and science to art and journalism. Some have taught for decades; others are still pretty new. A few of them look like they're still in middle school. [*Laughter*] But all of them share a passion for helping their kids develop their talents. All of them know the thrill of introducing students to something new and exciting. All of them are really, really, really good at their jobs.

I wish I could talk about each and every one of them, because all of you are remarkable. But in the interest of time, I'll just say a few words about one teacher in particular who happens to be the 2015 National Teacher of the Year: from Amarillo, Texas, Shanna Peeples.

So, Shanna, I'm going to brag on you a little bit. [*Laughter*] You just stand there and relax for a second. [*Laughter*] So Shanna teaches English at Palo Duro High School in Amarillo. Many of her students face challenges that would overwhelm adults, let alone kids. About 85 percent are considered economically disadvantaged. Many are refugees from places like Iraq and Somalia. Many of them have known trauma and violence in their lives and borne burdens that no kid should have to bear. Sometimes, just showing up to school is hard. But Shanna's classroom provides them a safe haven. And in Shanna, they find somebody who protects them fiercely and believes in them deeply and sets high expectations and is confident that they're going to do amazing things.

Now, according to Shanna, she wasn't always a teacher. In fact, she tried everything else she could before she finally accepted her destiny. She was a DJ. [*Laughter*] I want to hear more about that. [*Laughter*] She was a medical assistant. She was a journalist; a professional pet sitter. [*Laughter*] Finally, she realized what she was always meant to do, and that's helping young people discover the joy and power of words.

As somebody who grew up in a violent home, writing and books meant everything to Shanna. They were an escape and a comfort, a never-ending source of inspiration, a way to provide meaning to life at difficult times. One special teacher, she says, Ms. Belton, helped Shanna develop her passion. As Shanna puts it, "She taught me that it was possible to read and write my way into another life." That's a pretty good description of education in general.

Today, Ms. Peeples passes that same lesson on to her teachers—on to her students. In their writing circles, students pour their personal stories onto the page. And she tells them, "Everyone has a voice, everyone has a story worth sharing." They discover that their experiences aren't so singular, that whether they're an Ethiopian refugee or they've never set foot out of Texas, they're not so different, and they're not so alone, as a consequence.

Shanna works hard to earn and keep their trust and help them find new ways to grow—academically and emotionally—to rise above their present and to reach for their future. "In a sense, I sell hope," she says. I love that line. [*Laughter*] "In a sense, I sell hope." And her students are hungry for hope. Most kids are hungry for hope. Since Shanna arrived at Palo Duro 5 years ago, the number of kids taking the AP English III exam has doubled. This year, 30 students are taking the AP English IV exam. Before Shanna arrived, the number was exactly zero.

Shanna's impact reaches beyond her classroom as well. Her English-as-a-second-language students write bilingual books for kids and record lessons that refugee families can access online. Her AP students hit the streets of Amarillo on public health campaigns, conduct social science research on the health benefits of gratitude. I love that too. [*Laughter*] As her school's instructional coach and as a literacy trainer for the district, Shanna helps other teachers learn how to better teach reading and writing. For some of her colleagues, she's a godsend. Her principal says, "One teacher told me he was sinking until Shanna came to his rescue."

She often uses the tale of Hansel and Gretel to finish the school year. It's a story, she says, of how we can be our own heroes, find our way out of the forest. Shanna's students have gone on to the Ivy League. They've won prestigious scholarships. But more importantly, many have just found their way out of the forest into new and better chapters of their lives. They've fig-

ured out a way to carve a path for themselves, in large part because of her.

Now, obviously, Shanna is exceptional, but we could have told a similar story about every single one of the teachers standing here behind me. They are not just teaching formulas or phonetics. They're selling hope, sparking imagination, opening up minds, giving people—young people—a sense of their own power. They teach students to challenge themselves and dream beyond their circumstances and imagine different futures. And then, they work as hard as they can to help those young people make their dreams real.

So at the end of the school year, their children aren't just smarter, they're stronger and more confident and more resilient and more inspired. And maybe, if they've tripped, they've been able to get up and dust themselves off. And that's going to make them that much better in the future because they'll probably trip a little more.

Those qualities are hard to measure, but they are invaluable. America is hungry for more teachers like these, which is why we've got to acknowledge them, because every school has teachers like these, and we don't give them enough credit. And we don't talk about it enough.

So I want to thank all the teachers who are here today for your outstanding contributions to the life of our Nation. We couldn't be prouder of you. I like the fact that we have a strong contingent of men here today too, by the way. [*Laughter*] I like that. Way to go, guys. [*Laughter*]

And with that, I want to present Shanna with her crystal apple.

[*At this point, the President presented the National Teacher of the Year award to Shanna Peeples.*]

Here we go. Let's get a good picture of that. There you go. All right.

Fantastic. And with that, let me present the Teacher of the Year, Shanna Peeples.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:30 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Sandy Whitlow, principal, Palo Duro High School in Amarillo, TX.

Statement on the 70th Anniversary of the Liberation of Dachau
April 29, 2015

On this day, we remember when American forces liberated Dachau 70 years ago, dismantling the first concentration camp established by the Nazi regime. Dachau is a lesson in the evolution of darkness, how unchecked intolerance and hatred spiral out of control.

From its sinister inception in 1933, Dachau held political prisoners: opponents of the Third Reich. It became the prototype for Nazi concentration camps and the training ground for *Schutzstaffel* (SS) camp guards. As the seed of Nazi evil grew, the camp swelled with thousands of others across Europe targeted by the Nazis, including Jews, other religious sects, Sinti, Roma, LGBT persons, the disabled, and those deemed asocial.

Our hearts are heavy in remembrance of the more than 40,000 individuals from every walk of life who died and the more than 200,000 who suffered at Dachau. As we reflect on the anniversary of Dachau's liberation, we draw inspiration from, and recall with gratitude, the sacrifices of so many Americans—in particular, our brave soldiers—to win victory over oppression. Drawing from the words of Captain Timothy Brennan, who wrote to his wife and child after liberating the camp, "You cannot imagine that such things exist in a civilized world," we fervently vow that such atrocities will never happen again. History will not repeat itself.

Remarks on the ConnectED Initiative and a Question-and-Answer Session at Anacostia Neighborhood Library
April 30, 2015

Salisbury, MD, student Osman Yaya. Good morning, everyone. My name is Osman Yaya, and I'm a 6th grade student at Bennett Middle School in Salisbury, Maryland. Welcome to the White House and Discovery Education's "Of the People" series. We are live from Anacostia Library in Washington, DC, with students from Kramer Middle School and Brightwood Education Campus.

The President. Yay! [*Applause*]

Osman Yaya. As well as students joining us online from around the world. Today we have a very special guest with us, the President of the United States. Welcome, Mr. President.

The President. That's me. Thank you.

Osman Yaya. What do you want to talk about with us today?

The President. Well, we are in an outstanding library, part of the DC library system. But what I really want to talk about is how we can harness and take advantage of the amazing technological revolution that's taking place to help young people learn, to help young people succeed, help young people read, and ultimately, help young people be able to get great jobs and start their own businesses and do great things.

And so that's why it's wonderful to be with all the young people here today. And, I want to—Osman, I want to thank you for being our host.

Osman Yaya. Thank you.

The President. Very cool young guy, by the way. I've had a conversation with him already, and he's going to run a tight ship during our little town hall meeting here. [*Laughter*]

Two other people I want to acknowledge though. We've got our mayor of Washington, DC, Muriel Bowser, who's here, and we have the superintendent of schools for Washington, DC—Kaya Henderson is here.

So a while back, about a year and a half, 2 years ago, we announced something called ConnectED. And the idea was pretty simple. It turned out that in most schools around the country, people had a connection to the Internet, and there were computers in the classrooms, but a lot of times, you didn't have the kind of connections and wireless and high-speed broadband that would allow you to pull up information really quick on the computer. Or if you were in class, you might have to wait in line to use all the computers. Or the teachers weren't plugged in as well as they needed to be.

And so what we said was, we need to make sure that in all the schools in America, everybody has got a great Internet connection and a wireless connection so that if you're studying astronomy and are learning about the planets, right away you can pull down pictures and information that helps you learn. If you are learning world history and you want to know about ancient Egypt, right away, you can start looking at how the pyramids were built and read about that and create presentations off the Internet.

And so what we did was worked with a bunch of different people, both companies, private sector, but also government and the—what's called the FCC or the—this is the organization for the Federal Government that's in charge of making sure that phones and smartphones and television and all that stuff works properly—and we made a commitment that we would start putting billions of dollars into schools all around the country so that all the schools, 99 percent of the schools would have high-speed Internet connections.

And we're well on track to do that. So I'm really excited about that. But you also have to make sure that even if you've got a good Internet connection, that we've got libraries and schools that are getting resources, especially around reading and around books. And I'm the—I'm somebody that when I was young, I used to love libraries, used to love reading. I still love reading, but these days the stuff I read—I don't get to read for fun as much as I do for my work. [*Laughter*]

And so I've got a couple of announcements today where we've got some amazing organizations, libraries from around the country—the New York Public Library system in particular is taking the lead on some work to make sure that, working with book publishers, we're going to provide millions of eBooks online so that they're available for young people who maybe don't have as many books at home, don't always have access to a full stock of reading materials. They're going to be able to get about $250 million worth of books online. And we're also creating new apps—new applications—that allow people to pull down more information and more books.

And I just want to thank all the publishers who are making all these books available. And I want to thank the libraries and the schools that are making all these books available.

What I'm also announcing is a drive to make sure that young people have a library card in every city in America. And we've already got 30 cities and library districts that are coming together to make sure that everybody gets a free library card.

Because ultimately—and this is the last point I'll make, and then, we'll go to questions—all the young people here, I know you guys are working hard in school, but how well you do over the long term is going to depend on, do you love reading, do you love learning, do you know how to find information, do you know how to use that information? And the way you learn to do that is by reading a lot and learning how to think about the material that you're reading. And you've got great teachers, but you've got to not just do it in the classroom, you got to do it in life, thinking about how you're constantly getting more knowledge and more information. And in the Internet age, the best way to do that is making sure that you're plugged in.

So I am really excited and thankful for the publishers, the libraries, the elected officials who are participating in this. And the most important people, though, to participate in it are students, so that's why I wanted to talk to them.

All right. Back to you.

The President's Reading Preferences as a Child

Osman Yaya. I think everybody completely agrees with you. And before we start, I think the President and libraries all deserve a round of applause for what they've done this year.

So thousands and thousands of questions were submitted online. And our first question is from Mrs. Crook's second grade class at Pinegrove Elementary School in Alabama. They asked, "As a child, did you enjoy reading?" Well, you said you loved reading, so that question is done. And they also asked, "If so, what type of books sparked your imagination and interest?"

The President. Yes. It's a great question. When you're little, you read what your mom is reading to you or your dad is reading to you, so probably, the books I read weren't that different from what you guys were reading. I'm—like, I'm still a big Dr. Seuss fan. I was into that, the "Sneetches" and "Horton" and all that stuff. But then, as you get older you start making your own decisions about what you want to read.

I was into adventure stories. There was something called "The Hardy Boys" back in the day. I know you guys don't read that probably anymore, but—[*laughter*]. And books like "Treasure Island," which had—was about pirates. And I really enjoyed that.

Later on, I started getting into things like "The Lord of the Rings" and "The Hobbit," which is still popular today. And then, by the—when I got to college, when I got a little older, when I got into high school, then I started reading some classic books that when you guys get to high school you'll start reading, things like "Of Mice and Men," "The Great Gatsby," and things like that that are more novels that focus on adult experiences. But I also enjoyed reading science books, and I loved reading about planets and dinosaurs. And so it was sort of a mixed bag.

What do you like to read?

Osman Yaya. My favorite series has to be the Alex Rider series, if you've heard of those.

The President. What are they called?

Osman Yaya. Alex Rider.

The President. I haven't. What's it about?

Osman Yaya. It's about a boy whose parents pass away in a plane crash, and he lives with his grandfather—I mean, his uncle. And his uncle one day dies in a car accident, and later did he know that all the family worked in the M–16 and the CIA, so it's a really good storyline.

The President. Oh, okay.

Osman Yaya. And every book, he always has, like, secret gadgets, and there's always something he has to do.

The President. So he becomes, like, a young spy?

Osman Yaya. Pretty much.

The President. Well, that's pretty cool.

Osman Yaya. I can lend you some books if you need them. [*Laughter*]

The President. I might borrow them. They sound pretty interesting.

Osman Yaya. And to make you feel younger, my best friend read "Treasure Island."

The President. Well, that does make me feel better. [*Laughter*] Like, the "Harry Potter" books were pretty cool too. I read those to Malia, starting when she was around 5, and we read all the way through, all of them. I think we finished when she was about 13—maybe 12. So that was kind of cool.

Osman Yaya. Wow. Yes.

The President. Yes.

Osman Yaya. So that was the taste of some online questions. Do you want to ask the audience?

The President. I do. I want to ask the audience. Who's got a question? This young man right here. What's your name?

Q. I'm Darrell.

The President. Darrell, hold on a second, we're going to get a mike so everybody can hear you.

The President's Education/Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) Education

Q. Mr. President, when you were young, in high school, my question is, what did you study in school?

The President. Well, what grade are you in?

Q. Seventh.

The President. You're in seventh grade. So probably, the things I studied aren't that different from what you study. You had math and science and English and social studies. And we had art and music, which sometimes is forgotten about, but is really important too, because you learn a lot through the arts.

But by the time I was in seventh grade I guess I was doing algebra, I think, in seventh grade. And I don't remember what our math was. When I got to high school—and the same thing will happen to you guys—you'll start studying the same subject matter, but it will be a little more intense. You start getting a little more homework. So instead of just social studies, generally, about how the U.S. Government works, they might have you study the Civil War and Abraham Lincoln and how that war ended up shaping America and how it affected race relations when the slaves were freed and what happened in the South to—when segregation came back. So you'll study the same things, but you'll just kind of go deeper into it.

But do you have a favorite subject that you like?

Q. Science.

The President. Science? Yes. So in science, there's all kinds of different types of science, and typically, when you get to high school, you'll do some chemistry, you'll do some biology, you might do some physics. And one of the things we're really trying to encourage is more young people studying math and science, because we live in a technological age, and you've got to know a little bit about math and science. Not everybody is going to be an engineer, but everybody should know sort of the basics of how the world works and how—if you're using a smartphone, how does that work. And you may decide at some point that you want to program and create your own apps on a smartphone.

And particularly for the young ladies here, I want you guys to make sure that you look at math and science, because sometimes, young women aren't going into some of those areas like math and science as much, and they should. It's not because they don't know how to do it, it's because sometimes, they're dis-

couraged, the idea being that somehow, that's traditionally more of a boy thing. And that's something that we've got to get rid of.

I always tell Malia and Sasha I want boys and girls studying all the subjects and getting good in all the subjects. You don't want to get pushed aside just because you're a girl.

All right? Remember that.

Electronic Books/Education

Osman Yaya. Speaking about how people around the world are—like women and boys and girls, they all have to, like, learn science and math—a question from Nolan at West Lake Middle School in Texas. He asked, "Why is it important for kids across the country and the world to have access to electronic books and not only paper copies?"

The President. Well, I love traditional books. Right? So we're here in a library, and I still, when I have a book that I love, I love turning the pages and reading it. And when I was a kid, when I was reading, sometimes, I'd write and take notes in the margins, and I still have old books where I could see things I underlined, and it reminds me of how you learn.

But the truth of the matter is, we live in a digital age. How many people here have a smartphone? Right? So a lot of you do. And if you don't have one now, you're going to probably get one at some point. And so you're texting all day, and you're looking at Vines and Instagrams—[*laughter*]—and you're looking, like, at "Grumpy Cat" or some video of your favorite singer, rapper. And so more and more information is coming through in digital form. And what that means is, is that we want to make sure that that becomes a tool not just for entertainment, not just for talking to your friends, but also for learning.

And the good thing about eBooks is that it's really easy to carry. You don't have to have a library full of books in your house to be able to suddenly have access to every book in the world, potentially. And for a lot of people, they may live in a home where they don't have a lot of books. Books can be expensive. Your parents may not be able to afford buying a whole lot of books. But if we're able to set up, because of these publishers and because of the library system, a way in which people can pull all these books down just through the Internet, suddenly, that can even things out between poor kids and rich kids. Everybody has got the ability to learn. Everybody has got to have access to information.

Now, the one thing I've got to say, though, is we're really proud of what we're doing to make technology available to kids everywhere, but ultimately, you still have to have a hunger for learning in order to learn. You've got to want to learn. You've got to be curious and interested in how does the world work, or who is Shakespeare, or why is it that the Earth rotates around the Sun? You've got to be interested in those things and want to learn in order to learn.

You can have the nicest computer in the world and the best books in the world, but if you're lazy and sitting around just playing videogames and not really interested in it, well, you're probably not going to be a great student. And if you are curious and interested in learning, you're going to make sure that you figure out a way to learn, no matter what.

So we want to make sure that you have the best technology and the best information, but ultimately, the most powerful engine for learning is between your ears and the attitude that you have about learning.

Osman Yaya. I think attitude and using your brain is really important. And I think the audience just was listening to what you're saying about how eBooks are important and how regular books, they sort of change how people think of each other between rich and poor kids. So I think the audience might want to ask you something about why this is happening and why that might be.

The President. Okay, well, let's see what kind of questions we've got. Young lady right here. What's your name?

Q. Jaela

The President. Hey, Jaela

The President's Ambitions as a Child/Civil Rights Movement/Public Service

Q. What inspired you to be President?

The President. I'll tell you, Jaela—how old are you?

Q. Twelve.

The President. You're 12. When I was 12, I didn't want to be President. I think when I was 12, I was thinking about—first, I wanted to be an architect for a while and build buildings, which I thought would be—design buildings—I thought that would be really interesting. And then for a while, I thought I was going to be a basketball player. But I wasn't that good. [*Laughter*] I was pretty good. I played in high school. But I wasn't going to be good enough to play at pro basketball. Then, I thought about being a lawyer, and I did end up becoming a lawyer.

But I think it wasn't until I was in college that I really started thinking about what I wanted to do with my life, and I realized that the people who really inspired me we're people who were giving something back to the community or making the neighborhood better. And I was really inspired by the civil rights movement.

A lot of people have heard about Dr. King, and they—you guys in school see the "I Have a Dream" speech. And that's all important, and Dr. King was one of our greatest leaders of all time. But the reason that the civil rights movement worked, so that we ended segregation and people could go to school together and sit at a lunch counter together and segregation eventually went away, was because of the work of all kinds of ordinary people—nurses and bus drivers and maids—who started marching, and they met in churches, and they let the country know that they were being treated unfairly and showed the world and the country that everybody should be treated with dignity and respect and you shouldn't be judged based on your race.

And I was really inspired by that. So I thought to myself, well, how can I do that kind of work? And that's the work that I did before I even went to law school and got a law degree. And in some ways, that's how I got into politics and eventually being an elected leader, was trying to figure out how I can be helpful to people.

And the good news is that you don't have to be a politician to help people. There are a lot of people here in this neighborhood who are teachers, and that helps a lot of people. You probably have a teacher who is really an inspiring teacher. You like her—that teacher and they're making you try harder and learn more. Well, that's an incredible contribution. You might have somebody who's working in a church and helping to feed homeless people, maybe helping them get housing. That's really important.

So that's what inspired me. And then, it turned out, I was pretty good at it——

Osman Yaya. Pretty good at it. [*Laughter*]

The President. ——and eventually, I had the opportunity to run for President. But I'll be done being President in a couple of years, and I'll still be a pretty young man, not compared to you guys, but I'll still be pretty young. And so I'll go back to doing the kinds of work that I was doing before, just trying to find ways to help people: help young people get educations and help people get jobs and try to bring businesses into neighborhoods that don't have enough businesses. And that's the kind of work that I really love to do.

The President's Books

Osman Yaya. And also, before we get another question from the audience, since you're talking about people, like, doing what they want to be, how you started out being an architect—or you wanted to be an architect, and you were a lawyer and then a President, and how, like, it's never too old to be something that you want to, a little birdie told me that you were an author and you wrote a book.

The President. I wrote two books.

Osman Yaya. Could you talk about that to them?

The President. Well, I wrote—my first book was about me growing up and what my life was like and—my dad left when I was very young, so I never really knew my father, and I was raised basically by my mom and my grandparents. And so my first book was me telling my story about how I made sense of the world, not knowing my dad, and then eventually, kind of

tracing back and finding out who my father was and what had happened to him, because he had come from Kenya. That's where I got my name from. And so that was kind of a real personal book.

And then the second book I wrote was more about some of the issues that I was working on when I was a U.S. Senator. And I also wrote a children's book while I was doing that that was about great American heroes. So that wasn't about me. [*Laughter*] But I love writing. I don't have as much time to write as I used to.

The President's Advice on Writing

Osman Yaya. And since our audience is so big, not only here, online and around the world, one of our students from Golden Oak Montessori in California—Danica—she asked, "What is your favorite way to get rid of writer's block?" And explaining that, just talk about what is writer's block.

The President. Well, everybody has had writer's block. So you get an assignment from your teacher that says, I want you to write a one-page essay about what you did last summer. So you sit there, and there's a piece of paper, and you've got your pencil or your pen, and you're sitting there, and then you say, I don't know what to write about; I don't know what to say. That's writer's block.

And there's only one way to overcome writer's block. What do you think it is? Anybody got an idea? What do you do when come—when you've got writer's block? What do you do?

Q. What I do is just read books and try to find ideas in my head as I'm reading.

The President. Well, that's interesting. So there's the idea of reading books to give you ideas. That's one way of doing it.

Q. What I usually do is, like, I brainstorm before I even start my draft.

The President. So you just sit there and brainstorm? Kind of think about, okay, what ideas might be interesting?

Anybody else? Yes. What's your name?

Q. Paula.

The President. Let's get a mike on you. I want to—what's your name?

Q. Paula.

The President. Hi, Paula. Are you 12 as well?

Q. No, I'm 13.

The President. Thirteen.

Q. What I do is I listen to music.

The President. Yes? What—does it matter what music it is?

Q. No, it doesn't really matter.

The President. But it kind of loosens things up a little bit, makes you a little more relaxed?

Q. Yes.

The President. Yes, the—well, so those are all good strategies. But ultimately, the one way to get through writer's block is to just write something. I mean, the reason you get writer's block is because you're trying to write something really good. But I don't know if your teachers have sometimes told you that sometimes, the best thing to do is just to start putting some things on paper even if it's not good. But at least it makes you kind of get going.

It's not as intimidating if the page isn't blank, right? If you've already got something on paper, you can just kind of scratch out ideas and write down anything that comes to your mind. And then you can sit back, maybe listen to some music, take a break, take a look at it and see, okay, which one of these ideas I had is—are good? And then you can start outlining it.

But it takes—look, I still get writer's block sometimes. Sometimes, I have to write speeches—big speeches—and I'm sitting there, and I'm thinking, well, I don't know what I want to say. Or sometimes, I know what to—what I want to say, but I don't know how to say it or how to start it. Right?

So—but you can't be afraid of that. You just—a lot of times the reason people get blocked is because they're worried that what I'm going to do is not going to be that good. Well, nothing is very good the first time you do it. Your first draft is—everybody here has been learning how to—in your English classes, that you write drafts, right? You try something, you write it the first time. Listen, even the best writers, usually it's not that good the first time they write it.

Osman Yaya. Yes. And I think you sort of covered everything about that question. [*Laughter*]

The President. Okay, you think I'm just going to—Osman thinks I've been talking too long.

Osman Yaya. No, no. I think you just——

The President. No, let's move it along. I got you. [*Laughter*]

Osman Yaya. Speaking of writing and how—who here has written something in the past month in their reading class? Okay, I think everybody's had should be up. I wrote something in the last month in my reading class.

The President. Okay.

Role of Technology in Education

Osman Yaya. And I think some students here in the back maybe might have a question on, like, how you get started, and just, like, how books are going to help them in life later on in their writing skills.

The President. Well, why don't I just—does somebody have a question or a thought about how reading is affecting them? I'd be interested in that. Or they could tell me how technology in your classroom and computers, how you're using them. Are their problems in your classroom sometimes with not having enough resources and connections? I would just be interested in how you guys are using technology and reading in schools. So were—did you have your hand up earlier? Yes? No, I thought you did. Okay, this young man right here. Good. Introduce yourself.

Q. Oh, I'm Antoine.

The President. Antoine.

Q. The way I use technology in my art classes, sometimes, I get art block a lot because I stress out because I'm just thinking about how I'm going to do it, and I have it in my head, but I just can't put it on paper sometimes.

The President. Right.

Q. So some things that I do is, like, I ask my teachers, can I use their computers to, like, just look up random things about art and different styles.

The President. Well, that's interesting. So the—you might pull up some painting by Picasso or something? Or you might look at some graphic design, and it would just kind of help you get going and inspire you a little bit?

Q. Yes, pretty much.

The President. The—do you want to be an artist when you get older?

Q. Yes.

The President. Do you like all kinds of different art, drawing, painting, sculpture—do you—or are there particular kinds of art you like to do?

Q. For right now, I'm just working on drawing.

The President. Just drawing. Well, that's the base for a lot of art that you can do later.

The—anybody else want to talk about sort of how they're using technology in the classroom? I'm going with—you've been talking some good, and I really appreciate it. This young lady right here, what's your name? Hold on one second. Let's get a mike so we can all hear you better.

Q. My name is Sheree.

The President. Sheree.

Q. In our school, we have something called the blended learning model.

The President. Okay.

Q. Like, for 30 minutes of the day, we're on our computers on BrainHoney, working at our own individual pace.

The President. Right.

Q. And for the other 30 minutes, we're talking with our teachers and getting other information on the topic we're on in BrainHoney.

The President. Okay. Is that—are you using that for all your different topics: math, science, English?

Q. Yes.

The President. And how—when you're doing individual study, are you working with that computer the whole time, doing most of the work on the computer?

Q. Yes. They'll mostly work in different projects, like for computer class, we type PowerPoints, and sometimes, we'll start using Excel. And, like, in math class, we'll, like—it will have, like, visuals of what we're learning and things like that.

The President. That's great. And is there a computer for every student?

Q. Yes.

The President. Okay. So you don't have to, like, wait and use it?

Q. Yes.

The President. So that's a great example. Thank you. And that's exactly why we want to make sure every school is able to do just what you described. Because the good thing about having computers and this kind of model of learning that you just described is, if you're just sitting there and somebody is just doing all the talking, that can be boring sometimes, right? But if you're there doing problems and projects yourself, and then you talk to the teacher about the things you've done, and then you talk as a group, it keeps your more engaged, it keeps you more interested. Okay.

Osman Yaya. If anyone has a last question they want to ask——

The President. Any other questions? Yes, what's your—hold on a second. Let's get a microphone.

The President's Education

Q. Hello, Mr. President. My name is Mulugetta. I have one question for you.

The President. Go ahead.

Q. Actually, two.

The President. All right.

Q. What's your favorite subject? And what subject were you best at?

The President. That's interesting. When I was your age, I was actually best at math and science. But as I got older, the subjects I loved the most were English and history. So I still enjoyed math and science, but I loved hearing about other people's stories. I loved hearing about how people lived, what happened, and I liked reading about it in fictional form, in novels. But I also liked reading about what actually happened in history.

And that's why, by the time I got to college, I ended up majoring in political science. But it really—a lot of that was history and how government worked. And then, I had a minor in English. So I ended up reading a lot of books as well, fiction.

What's your favorite subject?

Q. Social studies.

The President. Social studies. Okay, well, we're sort of on the same wavelength. [*Laughter*]

Anybody else have a last question? This young lady, you get the last question. Here we go. What's your name?

The President's Education/Typing/The President's Use of Computers

Q. My name is Hannah.

The President. Hey, Hannah.

Q. What kind of technology did you have when you were in school?

The President. Oh, that's a great question. [*Laughter*] When I was in school, we had pencils. [*Laughter*] And we had pens, and we had some colored markers and erasers, scissors. We had rulers, staplers. [*Laughter*] No, I'm serious. We didn't even really use calculators that much until I was pretty far along in college—or in high school. And nobody had a computer in school.

So by the time you got to high school, you had to learn how to type, and you would start typing your papers. And typing was a hassle because, first of all, you had to learn how to type so you weren't just going one letter at a time. And then, once you learned how to do that, you'd still make some mistakes, and then, you'd have to get this thing called White-Out—[*laughter*]—which was like this little liquid that you'd kind of cross out the letter. And then, you'd have to wait till it dries, and you'd blow on it. Then you'd type again. [*Laughter*] And then sometimes, you got a tape that you could slip in there, but that was hard to do.

And so all through college I had to type stuff. And if you—and you'd have to figure out, like, where the margins were at the bottom. And if you were trying to do footnotes, it—you'd have to guess where you needed to stop. And the whole thing was a hassle; sometimes, it took you longer to type the paper than to write the paper.

And you didn't have books online or articles online, so you had to go into the library, and you'd have to get big stacks of books. If you were doing a report or project, you'd have a big stack of books like this. You'd have to carry them home, and then, you'd have to remember

to return them on time. Otherwise, you'd get fined. So you guys don't even know how good you've got it. [*Laughter*]

I—my first computer I didn't get until I was at law school. I didn't get to use a computer—I didn't own one, but we—that was the first time that I was using computers. I was 27, 28 years old before I was regularly using a computer. And I didn't own my own computer until I was—I take that back. I guess I was about 26—25, 26 is when I started using a computer and actually was able to buy one.

So that just shows you how much more information you have at your fingertips and how much faster you can learn than old people like me. But you've got to take advantage of it. Remember what I said. We're going to make sure that every school has computers and every school has the kind of Internet connections so you can pull up stuff fast.

And you guys are part of a generation that can learn more, faster, and get information from around the world better than anybody in human history. You've got more information available on your phone than the great scholars of the past had in the biggest libraries in the world. You've got more just right there in that phone you got in your little back pocket. But you've still got to take advantage of it. You still got to want to learn. You've got to want to read, and be curious. And if you do, you guys are going to be incredible leaders in the future.

All right? Really proud of you. Thank you for the excellent questions.

Everybody give Osman a big round of applause. He was outstanding hosting.

Osman Yaya. And now his turn.

[*At this point, Osman Yaya turned toward the President and applauded.*]

The President. Thank you very much. You did a great job.

Osman Yaya. Any final words you want to say?

The President. No. I just want to say you guys are great, and I'm looking forward to seeing great things out of you. And for everybody who participated digitally, thank you for being a part of this.

Osman Yaya. Well, Mr. President, on behalf of Discovery Education, thank you for coming out today with us. And answers to any questions that we didn't get to will be on discoveryeducation.com/ofthepeople. And an archive of today's video, if your friends didn't get to see it, will be on that link also.

Thanks for watching, everybody.

The President. Good job.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:11 a.m. The remarks were broadcast online as part of Discovery Education's "Of the People" series.

Remarks on Signing the Energy Efficiency Improvement Act of 2015
April 30, 2015

It is a great pleasure to welcome some outstanding legislators and advocates on behalf of an issue that should always be bipartisan, and that is, making sure that we have the most energy-efficient economy in the world.

We've made great strides since the beginning of my administration on everything from doubling fuel efficiency standards on cars to incentivizing smarter policies when we build buildings so that they're not wasting as much energy. And thanks to the leadership of folks like Senators Shaheen and Portman and Bennet and Representative Welch and other folks who are here, what we've seen is a coming together of Republicans and Democrats who are going to facilitate us being much smarter in terms of building buildings, how we use energy. And as a consequence, we're going to save money for consumers, we're going to save money for businesses, and we're going to deal with issues like climate change that have an enormous economic and health impact on Americans as a whole.

So I very much appreciate the efforts of all the organizations involved here. Senator Fran-

ken, I should have mentioned him. He stands out. [*Laughter*] And I just want to say how much I appreciate the outstanding efforts that have been made in both Chambers and by both parties. I hope that we can use this to build even more progress in the future, because we've got a lot more work to do. There's a lot of low-hanging fruit; this is the area where we can have the greatest environmental impact while making sure that we're creating good jobs and saving businesses and consumers money. So it's a win-win, and I very much appreciate the strong efforts that were made by everybody behind me here today.

With that, I'm going to sign this legislation.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:06 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. S. 535, approved April 30, was assigned Public Law No. 114–11.

Message to the Congress on the Recommendations of the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission
April 30, 2015

To the Congress of the United States:

My Administration fully supports the underlying objectives of the recommendations that the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission (the "Commission") offered in January. These recommendations represent an important step forward in protecting the long-term viability of the All-Volunteer Force, improving quality-of-life for service members and their families, and ensuring the fiscal sustainability of the military compensation and retirement systems.

As I directed in my letter of March 30, my team has worked with the Commission to further analyze the recommendations and identify areas of agreement. At this time I am prepared to support specific proposals for 10 of the Commission's 15 recommendations, either as proposed or with modifications that have been discussed among the Department of Defense, other agencies, and the Commission. These include the following:

- Survivor Benefit Plan
- Financial Education
- Medical Personnel Readiness
- Department of Defense and Department of Veterans Affairs Collaboration
- Child Care
- Service Member Education
- Transition Assistance
- Nutritional Financial Assistance
- Dependent Space-Available Travel
- Report on Military Connected Dependents

In some instances, the Department of Defense is already taking actions to implement these recommendations, and I will direct the Department to develop plans to complete this implementation. In those areas where legislation is required, I expect the Secretary of Defense to transmit to the Congress on my behalf the relevant legislative proposals, which I recommend be enacted without delay.

With respect to the remaining recommendations, given their complexity and our solemn responsibility to ensure that any changes further the objectives above, we will continue working with the Commission to understand how the following proposals would affect the All-Volunteer Force:

- Blended Retirement System
- Reserve Component Duty Statuses
- Exceptional Family Member's Support
- Commissary and Exchange Consolidation

I believe there is merit in all of these recommendations and that they deserve careful

consideration and study. I will ensure that the Congress is kept apprised of this ongoing work.

Finally, I agree with the Commission that we need to continue to improve the military health care system. The health care reforms proposed in my Fiscal Year 2016 Budget are a good first step and offer service members, retirees, and their families more control and choice over their health care decisions. This remains a critical issue, and my Administration will work with the Commission and interested Members of Congress in the coming months to develop additional reform proposals for consideration as part of my Fiscal Year 2017 Budget.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
April 30, 2015.

Remarks on World Press Freedom Day and an Exchange With Reporters
May 1, 2015

Well, as many of you know, Sunday is World Press Freedom Day, a day in which we reaffirm the vital role that a free press plays in democracy and shining a light on the many challenges, cruelties, and also hopeful stories that exist in countries all around the world.

Journalists give all of us, as citizens, the chance to know the truth about our countries, ourselves, our governments. That makes us better. It makes us stronger. It gives voice to the voiceless, exposes injustice, and holds leaders like me accountable.

Unfortunately, in too many places around the world, a free press is under attack by governments that want to avoid the truth or mistrust the ability of citizens to make their own decisions. Journalists are harassed, sometimes even killed. Independent outlets are shut down. Dissent is silenced. And freedom of expression is stifled.

And that's why I really appreciated and valued the opportunity to hear from three journalists who have been incredibly courageous under some very, very difficult circumstances. All three are from countries that severely restrict the freedom of the press. All three have been detained or harassed in the past. All three have sought refuge here in the United States. And we welcome them so that they can continue their important work.

Just very briefly, I want to mention them. We have Fatima Tlisova, who is from Russia. She reported on military operations in the North Caucasus region, as well as disappearances and corruption. She was attacked, kidnapped, tortured herself. Today, she reports for the Voice of America and most recently has spent time reporting on the Boston trials related to the Boston bombing. So we very much appreciate Fatima being here.

We also have Dieu Cay—that's his pen name—from Vietnam, a blogger who has written on human rights, including religious freedom, is a leading voice for greater press freedom in Vietnam. He spent 6 years in prison and was just released in October.

And finally, we have Lily Mengesha, is from Ethiopia. She helped to shine a light on the outrage of child brides. After her advocacy for a free press, she was harassed and detained. Today, she is with the National Endowment for Democracy.

So I heard firsthand, I think, from all of them the importance of all of us, including the United States Government, speaking out on behalf of the values of the freedom of the press. As I indicated to them, these are countries in which we are engaged and do a lot of business, and we think that engagement and diplomacy is absolutely critical to the national interest of the United States. But what's also important is that we speak out on behalf of the values that are enshrined in our Constitution and our Bill of Rights, because we believe those values are not simply American values, that certain core values like being able to express yourself and your conscience without danger is a human right, a universal right, and ultimately, makes the world better and stron-

ger when individual conscience and a press that is free is allowed to function.

It's also a time for us to reflect and honor all those journalists who are languishing in jail as we speak right now, are being harassed, are in danger, and, of course, journalists whose lives were lost. That includes Steven Sotloff and James Foley and Luke Somers, those killed in Paris at Charlie Hebdo. We'll keep working for the release of journalists who are unjustly imprisoned, including Jason Rezaian of the Washington Post, who is currently being held in Iran.

So once again, I want to thank the three journalists who are here for sharing with me in very clear and stark terms some of the challenges that folks are facing. I want everybody to understand that this will continue to be a priority for the United States in our foreign policy, not only because it's the right thing to do, but also because ultimately, I believe it's in the national interests of the United States.

So with that, since it's national—since it's World Press Freedom Day, I figure I'd better take at least one question. [*Laughter*]

Civil Rights Movement/Situation in Baltimore, Maryland/Law Enforcement Reform Efforts

Q. Will the charges against the police in Baltimore, sir, help to defuse things there?

The President. Before I answer your question, when we were discussing why I thought freedom of the press was so important, I actually used the example of Selma, the incredible courage of those marchers across the bridge, and I pointed out that had there not been good reporters like Mr. Bill Plante [CBS News] at that bridge that day, America's conscience might not have been stirred, and we might not have seen the changes that needed to be made. So that's just one example of why press freedom is so important.

Bill, the State's attorney had literally just walked to the podium as I was coming in here, so I have not had an opportunity to see the nature of the charges. I didn't watch the press conference that she engaged in. So let me just say this, building on what I said in the Rose Garden: It is absolutely vital that the truth comes out on what happened to Mr. Freddie Gray.

And it is my practice not to comment on the legal processes involved; that would not be appropriate. But I can tell you that justice needs to be served. All the evidence needs to be presented. Those individuals who are charged obviously are also entitled to due process and rule of law. And so I want to make sure that our legal system runs the way it should.

And the Justice Department and our new Attorney General is in communications with Baltimore officials to make sure that any assistance we can provide on the investigation is provided. But what I think the people of Baltimore want more than anything else is the truth. That's what people around the country expect. And to the extent that it's appropriate, this administration will help local officials get to the bottom of exactly what happened.

In the meantime, I'm gratified that we've seen the constructive, thoughtful protests that have been taking place, peaceful but clear calls for accountability; that those have been managed over the last couple of days in a way that's ultimately positive for Baltimore and positive for the country. And I hope that approach to nonviolent protest and community engagement continues.

And finally, as I've said for the last year, we are going to continue to work with the Task Force that we put together post-Ferguson. I'm actually going to be talking to mayors who are interested in figuring ways to rebuild trust between community and police and to focus on some of the issues that were raised by the Task Force right after this meeting. Our efforts to make sure that we're providing greater opportunity for young people in these communities, all those things are going to be continuing top priorities for the administration. And we'll probably have some more announcements and news about that in the days and weeks to come.

All right? Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:02 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Vietnamese

journalist Nguyen Van Hai by his pen name Dieu Cay; Marilyn J. Mosby, State's attorney, Baltimore, MD; Freddie C. Gray, Jr., who died on April 19 from injuries sustained during his arrest by Baltimore, MD, police officers on April 12; Caesar Goodson, Lt. Brian Rice, Edward Nero, William Porter, Sgt. Alicia White, and Garrett Miller, Baltimore, MD, police officers who were charged on May 1 in connection with the death of Mr. Gray; and Attorney General Loretta E. Lynch.

The President's Weekly Address
May 2, 2015

Hi, everybody. I'm speaking with you from the DC Public Library in Anacostia, where I just met with a group of promising middle school students. We spent some time talking about their lives and how we all care about their success and how that starts with a good education.

So one thing I announced here in Anacostia is a new project by libraries and major publishers to provide more than $250 million in free eBooks for low-income students. We also issued a challenge to mayors, libraries, and school leaders to help every student get a library card so they can expand their horizons in a place like this.

It's all part of our ConnectED initiative to connect 99 percent of America's students to high-speed Internet. Because no matter who you are, where you live, or how much money you've got, you should be able to access the world's knowledge and information just like anyone else. In a global economy, we've got to help ensure that everyone, of every age, in every ZIP Code—urban and rural—has the chance to learn the skills that lead directly to a good job.

It's also why I've put forward a plan to make 2 years of community college as free and universal for every American as high school is today. It's something I'll talk about in my commencement address next week at Lake Area Tech, in the small town of Watertown, South Dakota. It's a community college with a graduation rate that is nearly twice the national average. They're proving that a great education can be within everyone's reach.

All of us have a responsibility to not only make sure our own children have pathways to success, but that all children do. And a great education is the ticket to a better life like never before. Making sure all our kids receive one is the surest way to show them that their lives matter. And it's the smartest way to prove to them that in communities like this and in a country like ours, we believe in opportunity for all.

Thanks, everybody. And have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 12 p.m. on April 30 in Room 1 of the Anacostia Neighborhood Library for broadcast on May 2. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 1, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on May 2.

Statement Congratulating Prince William, Duke of Cambridge, and Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge, of the United Kingdom on the Birth of Their Daughter
May 2, 2015

Michelle and I are delighted to congratulate the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, her Majesty the Queen and the royal family, and all the people of the United Kingdom on the birth of the Royal Princess. On behalf of the American people, we wish the Duke and Duchess and their son George much joy and happiness on the occasion of the arrival of the newest member of their family.

NOTE: The statement referred to Queen Elizabeth II of England. This statement was released by the Office of the Press Secretary as a statement by the President and the First Lady.

Remarks at a Roundtable Discussion on Expanding Opportunity for Young People at Lehman College in New York City
May 4, 2015

Well, I just had an opportunity to have a conversation with some outstanding young men, many of them from here in New York, a few of them who have come as distant as California, Boston. We've got some folks from Jersey.

I want to thank Joe Echevarria, who has been heading up our My Brother's Keeper Alliance, the private-sector component of what we're doing. I'm going to have a lot more to say about that during my formal remarks. But if you have any doubt about the incredible promise and potential of America, then you need to get to know these young men, because they are examples of intelligence, hard work, empathy and compassion, street smarts. And all these young men are going to do incredible things with their lives. Many of them are already doing incredible things with their lives.

Part of what we wanted to do was to make sure we heard directly from young people who oftentimes are growing up in really tough situations: single-parent households, low-income communities, crime-infested areas. We've heard stories of some of these young men being stopped and put on the ground by police for no reason, domestic abuse inside the household, situations where the schools don't seem to be invested in their success.

And yet, despite all that, these young men are succeeding in some remarkable ways. And part of what I heard from them was that they're succeeding because somewhere along the line they've received a mentor, somebody who's just paying attention to them and giving them some sense of direction. Part of what we've heard is that they've had the opportunity in some way to participate in community service and to get involved and have been able to show themselves that they matter and they count and that they can make amazing things happen in their own communities.

And what all of them suggested is, is that if we're going to be successful in addressing some of the challenges that young men of color face around the country, that their voices have to be part of how we design programs and how we address these issues. Because they've got a lot to say, and what they say is powerful and makes a big difference.

So I just want to say to all of them how proud I am of you, how grateful I am to you. I want to thank John Legend to participate. John has been doing a lot of work on his own time, not just around "My Brother's Keeper," but dealing with issues in the criminal justice system and incarcerations and how we can steer how we interact with communities of color and low-income communities in a different direction. So we appreciate his leadership.

I'm very excited about what we can get done, but the main reason I'm excited is because listening to all these young men, I know that the future will be in good hands as long as we're giving them the support and the love that they need.

All right? Thank you, everybody. We'll see you outside.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:29 p.m. in Hearth Room 330 of the Music Building. In his remarks, he referred to Joseph J. Echevarria, Jr., former chief executive officer, Deloitte LLP, in his capacity as Cochair and Interim Chief Executive Officer of the White House "My Brother's Keeper" initiative; and musician John Legend, in his capacity as honorary chairman of the My Brother's Keeper Alliance.

Remarks Announcing the My Brother's Keeper Alliance at Lehman College in New York City
May 4, 2015

Hello, New York! Give Darinel a big round of applause for that introduction. Thank you so much. Thank you. Everybody, please have a seat. We are so proud of Darinel. We want to thank him for being such a great role model for other students here in New York and around the country.

I want to give a shout-out to a friend of mine who happens to be your assemblyman, Michael Blake. Where's Michael? He is around here somewhere. There he is. Michael—you've got to stand up, Michael. [*Laughter*] We're still teaching him about politics. When the President introduces you, you've got to stand up. [*Laughter*] Get some TV time. [*Laughter*]

So Mike grew up in tough circumstances as well. He worked hard, went to a good college. He joined my campaign, worked in the White House. Now he's in public office to make sure that other young people like him have every chance in the world. So we couldn't be prouder of him. It's great to see.

So I'm getting practice for Malia and Sasha leaving home. I've got all these incredible young people who worked on the White House staff who are now doing all kinds of great things.

I want to thank all the members of Congress and elected officials who are in the house. You've got a couple of proud Lehman graduates: Eliot Engel—where's Eliot? There he is. And Jose Serrano. And we've got some more folks—we've got three other folks from the New York delegation: Gregory Meeks, the always dapper Charlie Rangel, the outstanding Yvette Clarke. And visiting from Florida, Frederica Wilson. But they all share the same passion that I do, and that is making sure every young person in this country has opportunity.

And that's why we're all here today. Because we believe in the idea that no matter who you are, no matter what you look like, no matter where you came from, no matter what your circumstances were, if you work hard, if you take responsibility, then America is a place where you can make something of your lives.

And I want to thank Lehman for hosting us here today. And our community college system, the CUNY system, our public education institutions—they are all pathways for success. And we're very proud of what they do.

Everything that we've done since I've been President, the past 6½ years, from rescuing the economy to giving more Americans access to affordable health care to reforming our schools for all of our kids, it's been pursuit—it's been in pursuit of that one goal: creating opportunity for everybody. We can't guarantee everybody's success. But we do strive to guarantee an equal shot for everybody who's willing to work for it.

But what we've also understood for too long is that some communities have consistently had the odds stacked against them; that there's a tragic history in this country that has made it tougher for some. And folks living in those communities, and especially young people living in those communities, could use some help to change those odds.

It's true of some rural communities where there's chronic poverty. It's true of some manufacturing communities that have suffered after factories they depended on closed their doors. It's true for young people of color, especially boys and young men.

You all know the numbers. By almost every measure, the life chances of the average young man of color is worse than his peers. Those opportunity gaps begin early—often at birth—and they compound over time, becoming harder and harder to bridge, making too many young men and women feel like no matter how hard they try, they may never achieve their dreams.

And that sense of unfairness and of powerlessness, of people not hearing their voices, that's helped fuel some of the protests that we've seen in places like Baltimore and Ferguson and right here in New York. The catalysts

of those protests were the tragic deaths of young men and a feeling that law is not always applied evenly in this country. In too many places in this country, Black boys and Black men, Latino boys, Latino men, they experience being treated differently by law enforcement: in stops and in arrests and in charges and incarcerations. The statistics are clear, up and down the criminal justice system. There's no dispute.

That's why one of the many things we did to address these issues was to put together a Task Force on community policing. And this Task Force was made up of law enforcement and of community activists, including some who had led protests in Ferguson, some who had led protests here in New York, young people whose voices needed to be heard. And what was remarkable was, law enforcement and police chiefs and sheriffs and county officials working with these young people, they came up with concrete proposals that, if implemented, would rebuild trust and help law enforcement officers do their jobs even better and keep them and their communities even safer.

And what was clear from this Task Force was the recognition that the overwhelming majority of police officers are good and honest and fair and care deeply about their communities. And they put their lives on the line every day to keep us safe. And their loved ones wait and worry until they come through that door at the end of their shift.

As many of you know, New York's finest lost one of its own today, Officer Brian Moore, who was shot in the line of duty on Saturday night, passed away earlier today. He came from a family of police officers. And the family of fellow officers he joined in the NYPD and across the country deserve our gratitude and our prayers not just today, but every day. They've got a tough job.

Which is why, in addressing the issues in Baltimore or Ferguson or New York, the point I made was that if we're just looking at policing, we're looking at it too narrowly. If we ask the police to simply contain and control problems that we ourselves have been unwilling to invest and solve, that's not fair to the communities, and it's not fair to the police. What we gathered here to talk about today is something that goes deeper than policing. It speaks to who we are as a nation and what we're willing to do to make sure that equality of opportunity is not an empty word.

Across the country and in parts of New York, in parts of New Jersey, in parts of my hometown in Chicago, there are communities that don't have enough jobs, don't have enough investment, don't have enough opportunity. You've got communities with 30- or 40- or 50-percent unemployment. They've been struggling long before the economic crisis in 2007, 2008. Communities without enough role models. Communities where too many men who could otherwise be leaders, who could provide guidance for young people, who could be good fathers and good neighbors and good fellow citizens are languishing in prison over minor, nonviolent drug offenses.

Now, there's no shortage of people telling you who and what is to blame for the plight of these communities. But I'm not interested in blame. I'm interested in responsibility, and I'm interested in results.

And that's why we've partnered with cities to get more kids access to quality early childhood education, no matter who they are or where they're born. It's why we've partnered with cities to create Promise Zones, to give a booster shot to opportunity. That's why we've invested in ideas from support for new moms to summer jobs for young people, to helping more young people afford a college education.

And that's why, over a year ago, we launched something we call "My Brother's Keeper," an initiative to address those persistent opportunity gaps and ensure that all of our young people, but particularly young men of color, have a chance to go as far as their dreams will take them. It's an idea that we pursued in the wake of Trayvon Martin's death because we wanted it—the message sent from the White House in a sustained way that his life mattered, that the lives of the young men who are here today matter, that we care about your future, not just sometimes, but all the time.

In every community in America, there are young people with incredible drive and talent,

and they just don't have the same kinds of chances that somebody like me had. They're just as talented as me, just as smart. They don't get a chance. And because everyone has a part to play in this process, we brought everybody together. We brought business leaders and faith leaders, mayors, philanthropists, educators, entrepreneurs, athletes, musicians, actors, all united around the simple idea of giving all our young people the tools they need to achieve their full potential.

And we were determined not to just do a feel-good exercise, to write a report that nobody would read, to do some announcement, and then once the TV cameras had gone away and there weren't protests or riots, then somehow we went back to business as usual. We wanted something sustained. And for more than a year, we've been working with experts to identify some of the key milestones that matter most in every young person's life, from whether they enter school ready to learn to whether they graduate ready for a career. Are they getting suspended in school? Can we intervene there? Are they in danger of falling into the criminal justice system? Can we catch them before they do? Key indicators that we know will make a difference. If a child is reading by the third grade at grade level, we know they've got a chance of doing better. If they aren't involved with the criminal justice system and aren't suspended while they're in school, we know they've got a chance of doing better. So there are certain things that we knew would make a difference.

And we've looked at which programs and policies actually work in intervening at those key periods. Early childhood education works. Job apprenticeship programs work. Certain mentoring programs work. And we've identified which strategies make a difference in the lives of young people, like mentoring or violence prevention and intervention.

And because we knew this couldn't be the work of just the Federal Government, we challenged every community in the country—big cities, small towns, rural counties, tribal nations—to publicly commit to implementing strategies to help all young people succeed. And as a result, we've already got more than 200 communities across the country who are focused on this issue. They're on board, and they're doing great work. They're sharing best practices. They're sharing ideas.

All of this has happened just in the last year. And the response we've gotten in such a short amount of time, the enthusiasm and the passion we've seen from folks all around the country, proves how much people care about this. Sometimes, politics may be cynical, the debate in Washington may be cynical, but when you get on the ground and you talk to folks, folks care about this. They know that how well we do as a nation depends on whether our young people are succeeding. That's our future workforce.

They know that if you've got African American or Latino men here in New York who instead of going to jail are going to college, those are going to be taxpayers. They're going to help build our communities. They will make our communities safer. They aren't part of the problem, they're potentially part of the solution, if we treat them as such.

So we've made enormous progress over the last year. But today, after months of great work on the part of a whole lot of people, we're taking another step forward, with people from the private sector coming together in a big way. We're here for the launch of the My Brother's Keeper Alliance, which is a new nonprofit organization of private sector organizations and companies that have committed themselves to continue the work of opening doors for young people—all our young people—long after I've left office. It's a big deal.

I want to thank the former CEO of Deloitte, Joe Echevarria, who's been involved for a long time. He has taken the lead on this alliance. Joe, stand up. You've done an incredible job. Just like the "My Brother's Keeper" overall effort that we launched last year, Joe and My Brother's Keepers Alliance—they're all about getting results. They've set clear goals to hold themselves accountable for getting those results: Doubling the percentage of boys and young men of color who read at grade level by the third grade, increasing their high school

graduation rates by 20 percent, getting 50 more—50,000 more of those young men into postsecondary education or training.

They've already announced $80 million in commitments to make this happen, and that is just the beginning. And they've got a great team of young people who helped to work on this, a lot of them from Deloitte. We appreciate them so much. We're very proud of the great work that they did.

But here's what the business leaders who are here today—and Joe certainly subscribes to this—will tell you, they're not doing this out of charity. The organizations that are represented here, ranging—as varied as from Sprint to BET—they're not doing it just to assuage society's guilt. They're doing this because they know that making sure all of our young people have the opportunity to succeed is an economic imperative.

These young men, all our youth, are part of our workforce. If we don't make sure that our young people are safe and healthy and educated and prepared for the jobs of tomorrow, our businesses won't have the workers they need to compete in the 21st-century global economy. Our society will lose in terms of productivity and potential. America won't be operating at full capacity. And that hurts all of us.

So they know that there's an economic rationale for making this investment. But frankly, this is also about more than just economics, it's about values. It's about who we are as a people.

Joe grew up about a mile from here, in the Bronx. And as he and I were sitting there, listening to some incredible young men in a roundtable discussion, many of them from this community, their stories were our stories. So, for Joe and I, this is personal, because in these young men we see ourselves.

The stakes are clear. And these stakes are high: At the end of the day, what kind of society do we want to have? What kind of country do we want to be? It's not enough to celebrate the ideals that we're built on: liberty for all and justice for all and equality for all. Those can't just be words on paper. The work of every generation is to make those ideals mean something concrete in the lives of our children—all of our children.

And we won't get there as long as kids in Baltimore or Ferguson or New York or Appalachia or the Mississippi Delta or the Pine Ridge Reservation believe that their lives are somehow worth less. We won't get there when we have impoverished communities that have been stripped away of opportunity and where, in the richest nation on Earth, children are born into abject poverty.

We won't be living up to our ideals when their parents are struggling with substance abuse or are in prison or unemployed, and when fathers are absent and schools are substandard and jobs are scarce and drugs are plentiful. We won't get there when there are communities where a young man is less likely to end up in college than jail or dead and feels like his country expects nothing else of him.

America's future depends on us caring about this. If we don't, then we will just keep on going through the same cycles of periodic conflict. We ask police to go into communities where there's no hope. Eventually, something happens because of the tensions between societies and these communities, and the police are just on the front lines of that.

And people tweet outrage. And the TV cameras come. And they focus more on somebody setting fire to something or turning over a car than the peaceful protests and the thoughtful discussions that are taking place. And then, some will argue, well, all these social programs don't make a difference. And we cast blame. And politicians talk about poverty and inequality and then gut policies that help alleviate poverty or reverse inequality. And then, we wait for the next outbreak or problem to flare up. And we go through the same pattern all over again, so that, in effect, we do nothing.

There are consequences to inaction. There are consequences to indifference. And they reverberate far beyond the walls of the projects or the borders of the barrio or the roads of the reservation. They sap us of our strength as a nation. It means we're not as good as we could be. And over time, it wears us out. Over time, it weakens our Nation as a whole.

The good news is, it doesn't have to be this way. We can have the courage to change. We can make a difference. We can remember that these kids are our kids. "For these are all our children," James Baldwin once wrote. "We will all profit by, or pay for, whatever they become."

And that's what "My Brother's Keeper" is about, that's what this alliance is about. And we are in this for the long haul. We're going to keep doing our work at the White House on these issues. Sometimes, it won't be a lot of fanfare. I notice we don't always get a lot of reporting on this issue when there's not a crisis in some neighborhood. But we're just going to keep on plugging away. And this will remain a mission for me and for Michelle not just for the rest of my Presidency, but for the rest of my life.

And the reason is simple. Like I said before—I know it's true for Joe; it's true for John Legend, who was part of our roundtable; it's true for Alonzo Mourning who is here, part of our board—we see ourselves in these young men.

I grew up without a dad. I grew up lost sometimes and adrift, not having a sense of a clear path. And the only difference between me and a lot of other young men in this neighborhood and all across the country is that I grew up in an environment that was a little more forgiving. And at some critical points, I had some people who cared enough about me to give me a second chance or a third chance or to give me a little guidance when I needed it or to open up a door that might otherwise been closed. I was lucky.

Alex Santos is lucky too. Where's Alex? Alex is here. Stand up, Alex. So Alex was born in Puerto Rico, grew up in Brooklyn and the Bronx, in some tough neighborhoods. When he was 11, he saw his mom's best friend, a man he respected and looked up to, shot and killed. His older brothers dropped out of school, got caught up in drugs and violence. So Alex didn't see a whole lot of options for himself, couldn't envision a path to a better future. He then dropped out of school.

But then, his mom went back to school and got her GED. She set an example. That inspired Alex to go back and get his GED. Actually, it's more like she stayed on him until he went back. [*Laughter*] And I know, because just like I was lucky, I also had a mom who used to get on my case about my studies. So I could relate. But this is what Alex says about his mom: "She made me realize that no matter what, there's a second chance in life."

So today, Alex is getting his GED. He's developed a passion for sports. His dream is to one day work with kids as a coach and set an example for them. He says he never thought he could go to college; now he believes he can. All Alex wants to be is a good role model for his younger brothers Carlos and John, who are bright and hard-working and doing well in school. And he says, "They matter so much to my life, and I matter to theirs."

So, Alex and his brothers and all the young people here, all the young ones who are out there struggling, the simple point to make is: You matter. You matter to us.

It was interesting during the roundtable, we asked these young men—incredible gifted young men, like Darinel—asked them, what advice would you give us? And they talked about mentor programs, and they talked about counseling programs and guidance programs in schools. But one young man, Malachi, he just talked about, we should talk about love. Because Malachi and I shared the fact that our dad wasn't around and that sometimes we wondered why he wasn't around and what had happened.

But really that's what this comes down to is, do we love these kids? See, if we feel like because they don't look like us or they don't talk like us or they don't live in the same neighborhood as us that they're different, that they can't learn or they don't deserve better, or it's okay if their schools are rundown, or it's okay if the police are given a mission just to contain them rather than to encourage them, then it's not surprising that we're going to lose a lot of them.

But that's not the kind of country I want to live in. That's not what America is about. So

my message to Alex and Malachi and Darinel and to all the young men out there and young boys who aren't in this room, haven't yet gotten that helping hand, haven't yet gotten that guidance—I want you to know, you matter. You matter to us. You matter to each other. There's nothing, not a single thing, that's more important to the future of America than whether or not you and young people all across this country can achieve their dreams.

And we are one people, and we need each other. And we should love every single one of our kids. And then we should show that love, not just give lip-service to it, not just talk about it in church and then ignore it, not just have a seminar about it and not deliver.

It's hard. We've got an accumulation of not just decades, but, in some cases, centuries of trauma that we're having to overcome. But if Alex is able to overcome what he's been through, then we as a society should be able to overcome what we've been through. If Alex can put the past behind him and look towards the future, we should be able to do the same.

I'm going to keep on fighting and everybody here is going to keep on fighting to make sure that all of our kids have the opportunity to make of their lives what they will. Today is just the beginning. We're going to keep at this for you, the young people of America, for your generation and for all the generations to come.

So, thank you. God bless you. God bless all of you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:56 p.m. in the Faculty Dining Room of the Music Building. In his remarks, he referred to Darinel Montero, student, Bronx International High School in New York City; Joseph J. Echevarria, Jr., Cochair and Interim Chief Executive Officer, White House "My Brother's Keeper" initiative; musician John Legend, in his capacity as honorary chairman, and Alonzo Mourning, former center, National Basketball Association's Miami Heat, in his capacity as a board member, of the My Brother's Keeper Alliance; New York City resident Alex Santos; and Malachi Hernandez, student, Boston Latin Academy in Boston, MA.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Dinner in New York City
May 4, 2015

The President. Thank you, everybody. Thank you. No need to do that, no, no, no. Well, it is wonderful to see so many old friends and a few new ones here today. I just want to, first of all, thank Leslie and Loida and the entire family for their incredible hospitality. Please give them a big round of applause. They have been wonderful supporters from the very start. And they couldn't be more gracious. And thank you for opening up this amazing home. And I suspect that your neighbors aren't thrilled. [*Laughter*]

Actor Leslie Lewis. Some of them are here.

The President. A few of them are here. [*Laughter*] So, neighbors, thank you. We're tying up the elevators and messing up the streets, I know. [*Laughter*]

I'm going to be very brief at the front because I just want to spend most of my time in dialogue. A lot of you have been to these before, and you know I like taking questions. Let me make a couple of points.

Obviously, we've made some enormous strides over the last 6½ years in repairing the economy. We've seen 5 years straight of job growth. Stock market is booming. Almost every economic indicator you can think of, we are doing better than when I came into office. Energy production, health care, graduation rates, college attendance rates, reductions in carbon emissions—you name it—we've been making some incredible strides.

But I think that what we're all aware of—and certainly what's been brought to, once again, America's attention over the last several months—is that there are still folks left behind from recovery. There are communities that are still locked out of opportunity. And part of our task over the next 2 years, next 5 years, 10, 20 years is making sure that the basic ideal upon

which this country was founded is realized; that there's not a child in America who, if they're willing to work hard, can't make it.

And whether we see the news in Ferguson or New York or Baltimore, what we know is, that's still not the case. So part of what brought me here to New York today was to announce one more piece of this overall initiative we're calling "My Brother's Keepers," designed to focus on those communities and those young people, and particular, young men, who are locked out of opportunity. And the private sector and corporate community came together, initially have raised $80 million, and are going to keep on going, for us to provide mentorship programs and apprenticeship programs and to work with cities and communities all across the country that are focused on this issue.

But it does speak to the larger set of challenges that we still have. We are growing faster than most other advanced economies. Our unemployment rate has come down faster than almost anybody else's. We've got all the best cards in terms of cheap energy sources, innovation, the best university systems in the world, the most dynamic economy in the world. But if we are going to be successful over the long haul, if we're going to win what will be a very competitive 21st century, we've got to have everybody on the field. We can't leave entire sectors of our economy or entire communities behind.

And that means the work that remains to be done around early childhood education, making college more affordable, encouraging greater investment in research and development and science and technology, making sure that we're rebuilding the infrastructure of this country—those are all big pieces of business that have not yet happened.

Now, I intend to get as much done in the next 22 months as possible. As you've noticed, I've been pretty busy—[*laughter*]—and I will continue to be. And I'm hopeful that we may find some opportunities for collaboration with the Republican Congress, for example, on trade, hopefully, on infrastructure. There may be some things where there's some convergence. But if we're going to deliver on the promise that's there for all of us, then we're still going to need to realign our budgets to our values, and we're going to have to fight for priorities like immigration reform.

And those battles are going to depend, in large part, on the continuing effort in the political arena. And we've got to have strong candidates. But more importantly, we've got to have an engaged citizenry. And that's why, despite the fact, as Michelle helpfully reminds me, I don't have another race to run—[*laughter*]—and she's pretty happy about that—that's why I'm here this evening. And I know that's why you're here. Because this is not a project that stops after a certain term in office, and it's not a project that stops after an election. This is something that we have to sustain over the long term.

And the values and ideals that I believe in are ones that I've never expected to realize just in one term or in one Presidency. In fact, I said that in Grant Park the day I was elected.

And so I just want to say thank you to all of you because we're going to need you for the long haul. America needs you. And the Democratic Party is grateful for you.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:14 p.m. at the residence of Loida Nicolas Lewis. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks on the Nomination of General Joseph F. Dunford, Jr., To Be Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and General Paul J. Selva To Be Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

May 5, 2015

Good morning. As Americans, we are blessed with the strongest military the world has ever known. Yes, our system of equipment and technology, our logistical capacity is unmatched. But what makes us the best, the reason no other nation can do what we do, is our people: patriotic men and women across our country who step forward, raise their hand, and take an oath to defend our Nation. It's our men and women in uniform—and their leaders—who make our Armed Forces the very best.

Among our military leaders, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is the principal military adviser to me and my national security team, including Vice President Biden, my National Security Adviser, Susan Rice, and our Secretary of Defense, Ash Carter.

In recent years, I have been deeply grateful for the service of our Chairman, General Marty Dempsey, and our Vice Chairman, Admiral Sandy Winnefeld. Marty and Sandy will complete their terms later this year. I'll have a chance to say nice things about them later. I can tell you that they have been outstanding, and I could not have asked for a better team. But today I'm proud to announce my nominees to be the next Chairman, General Joe Dunford, and the next Vice Chairman, General Paul Selva.

Again, I want to thank General Dempsey and Admiral Winnefeld for being here today. Marty and Sandy, we are extraordinarily grateful for all that you've done. And we'll have an opportunity to pay tribute to you in the months ahead. I've relied on you both—your advice, your counsel, your judgment—as we've navigated the urgent challenges of recent years: from ending our combat mission in Afghanistan to leading the international coalition to destroy ISIL; conducting humanitarian operations from typhoon relief in the Philippines to fighting Ebola in West Africa; and strengthening our security alliances from Europe to Asia. At every step, you have been critical to our processes, and I have valued not only your counsel, but your friendships.

At the same time, Marty and Sandy have helped to guide our forces through difficult fiscal times, especially sequestration. They've stayed focused on readiness and training and modernization. Today, there are also more opportunities for women in our Armed Forces. We're tackling the outrage of sexual assault, which has no place in our ranks. We've made progress in large part because leaders like Marty and Sandy have made sure we're recruiting and training and equipping and retaining the best fighting force on the planet. I look forward to honoring Marty and Sandy and thanking them more fully for their extraordinary contributions to their Nation—to our Nation.

There are other things we're going to miss. We're going to miss Marty's incomparable singing voice. [*Laughter*] He will not be singing today. [*Laughter*] But I'm going to put my request in early for a final number at your farewell. But on behalf of myself, our entire national security team, and our Armed Forces, thank you. And to Deanie and to Mary, we are grateful for your families' service.

My choice for the next Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General Joe Dunford, is one of the most admired officers in our military. A native of Boston, Joe is the very definition of "Boston Strong." The son of a retired Boston police officer and Marine veteran of Korea, Joe followed in his father's footsteps and has distinguished himself through nearly 40 years of military service. He's commanded Marines in field, from the platoon level to a Marine Expeditionary Force. During the invasion of Iraq, he led Marines in the charge to Baghdad.

Given his combat experience, I was proud to nominate Joe as the commander of American and Coalition Forces in Afghanistan. I've had a chance to work with him. I have been

extraordinarily impressed by Joe, from the Situation Room, where he helped to shape our enduring commitment to Afghanistan, to my visit last year to Bagram, where I saw his leadership firsthand.

I know Joe. I trust him. He's already proven his ability to give me his unvarnished military advice based on his experience on the ground. Under his steady hand, we've achieved key milestones, including the transition to Afghan responsibility for security, historic Afghan elections, and the drawdown of U.S. forces, setting the stage for our combat mission there.

So Joe is a proven leader of our joint force, including our troops in Afghanistan, who he served Christmas dinner to. He's one of our military's most highly regarded strategic thinkers. He's known and respected by our allies, by Members of Congress—on both sides of the aisle—and by colleagues across our Government. He's also tireless. His staff has been known to carry around a voice recorder to keep up with his commands and new ideas.

He just began his service as Commandant of his beloved Marine Corps. So, Joe, I appreciate your willingness to take on this new assignment. I think the only downside in my book is, as a White Sox fan, there is yet another Red Sox fan who I'm going to have to be dealing with. [*Laughter*] And I want to thank you and your wife Ellyn for your continued service.

In General Paul Selva, we have a Vice Chairman with 35 years of military service, as both a pilot and a commander. As leader of Air Mobility Command, he earned a reputation as a force for change and innovation. I understand that when it was time to deliver the final C–17 to the Air Force, Paul went to the cockpit and helped fly it himself. As head of Transportation Command, he's been committed to the partnerships that are a core principle of our national security strategy, whether it's supplying our joint force around the world, in operations large and small, to supporting and keeping safe our diplomats and Embassy personnel overseas.

Paul also served as Secretary of State Clinton's military adviser for the first years of my Presidency, so he grasps the strategic environment in which our forces operate. He understands that our military, as powerful as it is, is one tool that must be used in concert with all the elements of our national power.

I should note that, as a graduate of the Air Force Academy, Paul is especially grateful to the Academy because it's there that he met his wife Ricki, who also served in the Air Force. And, Paul and Ricki, thank you both for taking on this next chapter of your service together.

Joe, Paul, we continue to call on our Armed Forces to meet a range of challenges. We have to keep training Afghan forces and remain relentless against Al Qaida. We have to push back against ISIL and strengthen forces in Syria [Iraq],* and build moderate opposition in Syria. We have to stand united with our allies in Europe and keep rebalancing our posture as a Pacific power. We have to keep investing in new capabilities to meet growing threats, including cyber attacks.

So, as Commander in Chief, I'll be looking to you for your honest military advice as we meet these challenges. As we do, we're also going to keep working with Congress on a more responsible approach to defense spending, including reforms in the Department so we can preserve the readiness of our All-Volunteer Force, keep faith with our troops and our military families, and care for our wounded warriors. This is work we have to do together, as a nation.

Again, to Joe, to Paul, to your families, on behalf of the American people, thank you for your continued service to our Nation. I urge our friends in the Senate—and I know I won't have a problem with Jack Reed, who's sitting right here—to confirm these remarkable leaders without delay so we can stay focused on the work that unites us all as Americans: keeping our military strong, our Nation secure, our citizens safe.

Thank you very much.

* White House correction.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:57 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Deanie Dempsey, wife of Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, USA; Mary Winnefeld, wife of Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Adm. James A. "Sandy" Winnefeld, Jr., USN; Joseph F. Dunford, Sr., father of Chairman-designate Dunford; and former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

Remarks at a Cinco de Mayo Celebration
May 5, 2015

The President. Buenas tardes. Bienvenidos a la Casa Blanca—[*applause*]—*su casa tambien.* And Happy Cinco de Mayo. I know there are tacos and churros and margaritas. [*Laughter*]

Audience member. And tequila!

The President. Tequila. [*Laughter*] So I'm going to be brief. I'll let you get back to the tequila. She sounded very excited about that. [*Laughter*]

Let me, first of all, ask everybody to give a big round of applause to our musical guests, the Esperanza Azteca Youth Orchestra of Los Angeles and Puebla, Mexico. [*Applause*] Yay! So one of the biggest Cinco de Mayo fiestas in the world happens every year in L.A., and some of these students left their hometowns to be here today. So we are very, very proud of them. I also want to welcome our guests from Mexico—Under Secretary Sergio Alcocer. Give him a big round of applause. Ambassador Alejandro Estivill is here. Give him a big round of applause.

We know the origins of Cinco de Mayo. On this day, more than 150 years ago, thousands of soldiers from one of the world's most powerful armies marched towards the city of Puebla. And the farmers and the peasants who lived there were as hopelessly outmatched as their uniforms were mismatched. But they held their ground. They sent the invading army running in the other direction. It's one of the great David-vs.-Goliath stories in history.

And the United States, of course, has made Cinco de Mayo a celebration of our own. After World War II, when States and cities across the country sought to recognize Mexico and Mexican Americans for their contributions to the war effort, recognition of Cinco de Mayo in the United States took off. And today, we celebrate it with parades and barbecues and dances and street fairs and parties just like we're having today, with tequila. [*Laughter*]

So this holiday is an opportunity to remember how deeply Mexican American culture is woven into the fabric of this country. People of Mexican heritage and their children and their children's children have influenced our commerce and our culture and our language and our literature, our faith and our food. Like so many immigrant groups in this country, Mexican Americans have kept us young and dynamic and energetic as a people.

So we reaffirm our commitment to those traditions, and part of the way we reaffirm it is to reaffirm our commitment to comprehensive immigration reform, because that's who we are as a country. The story of America is a dynamic story. So we're not just going to stop now suddenly and forget everything that helped to build this country. And part of what built it was the incredible power of our immigrant communities. Our prosperity, our security demands comprehensive immigration reform.

That's the reason I took the actions I did last fall—within my legal authority—to make our immigration system fairer and smarter and more just. That's why Congress still needs to step up and ultimately pass comprehensive immigration reform.

Audience members. Yes!

The President. I know that it's so challenging when you know the right thing to do, and there are folks blocking your way and obstacles in your path. But I just want to remind everybody that progress is not always a straight line. Sometimes, you have to take this turn and that turn and go over this mountain and that valley. But the good news is, the American people are

with us, because they understand that the story of America is a story of progress. And it's often written by people who come here with a vision for what's possible and are willing to take risks and aspire to something bigger than what they've already known.

As one of my predecessors, Franklin Roosevelt, once said, "Remember, always, that all of us, and you and I especially, are descended from immigrants and revolutionists." Immigrants and revolutionists. Now, that's not the story of looking backwards, that's the story of looking forward. That's what we're doing today. And that's why I'm so glad that all of you are joining us.

So with that, *viva los Estados Unidos. Viva Mexico. Feliz Cinco de Mayo.* And go easy on the tequila. [*Laughter*] *Muchas gracias,* everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:42 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Under Secretary for North America Sergio Manuel Alcocer Martinez de Castro of Mexico; and Supreme Court Justice Alejandro Estivill-Castro of Mexico, in his former capacity as Mexico's Ambassador to the U.S.

Statement on the Death of Former Speaker of the House of Representatives James C. Wright, Jr.
May 6, 2015

Michelle and I were saddened to learn of the passing of former Congressman and Speaker of the House Jim Wright. Jim represented the people of his beloved Texas for over three decades. He was a committed public leader and a proud World War II veteran who dedicated much of his life to serving his country. As a Representative from Texas and Speaker of the House, Jim was passionate about investing in infrastructure, and he worked tirelessly to promote peace in Central America. Today our thoughts and prayers are with Jim's family and friends and the people he represented in Congress for so many years.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Actions of the Government of Syria
May 6, 2015

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act, 50 U.S.C. 1622(d), provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency, unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency with respect to the actions of the Government of Syria declared in Executive Order (E.O.) 13338 of May 11, 2004—as modified in scope and relied upon for additional steps taken in E.O. 13399 of April 25, 2006, E.O. 13460 of February 13, 2008, E.O. 13572 of April 29, 2011, E.O. 13573 of May 18, 2011, E.O. 13582 of August 17, 2011, E.O. 13606 of April 22, 2012, and E.O. 13608 of May 1, 2012—is to continue in effect beyond May 11, 2015.

The regime's brutal war on the Syrian people, who have been calling for freedom and a representative government, not only endangers the Syrian people themselves, but could yield greater instability throughout the region. The Syrian regime's actions and policies, including pursuing chemical and biological weapons, supporting terrorist organizations, and obstructing the Lebanese government's ability to function effectively, are fostering the rise of extremism and sectarianism and

continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States. For these reasons, I have determined that it is necessary to continue in effect the national emergency declared with respect to this threat and to maintain in force the sanctions to address this national emergency.

In addition, the United States condemns the Asad regime's use of brutal violence and human rights abuses and calls on the Asad regime to stop its violent war and allow a political transition in Syria that will forge a credible path to a future of greater freedom, democracy, opportunity, and justice.

The United States will consider changes in the composition, policies, and actions of the Government of Syria in determining whether to continue or terminate this national emergency in the future.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to John A. Boehner, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate. The letter referred to President Bashar al-Asad of Syria. The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks on Presenting the Commander in Chief's Trophy to the United States Air Force Academy Falcons
May 7, 2015

Hello, everybody. Welcome to the White House. Please have a seat. And congratulations to this year's winners of the Commander in Chief's Trophy, the Air Force Fighting Falcons. [*Applause*] Hey!

So this is the Falcons' third trip to the White House in the last 5 years. All told, it is a record 19 times that they have earned this unreasonably large trophy. [*Laughter*] But if anybody can figure out how to get this thing to where it needs to go, it is the Air Force. [*Laughter*]

I want to start by recognizing the Air Force Chief of Staff, General Mark Welsh, as well as the Superintendent of the Air Force Academy, Lieutenant General Michelle Johnson. [*Applause*] Yay! And of course, we've got Coach Troy Calhoun, a graduate of the Air Force Academy himself.

Now, last year at this time, most folks did not think that Coach Calhoun and the Falcons would be here today. They had just come off a less-than-ideal season. [*Laughter*]

But this year, they came back determined to set a new tone. The Falcons won four of their first five games. In a big win over Navy, quarterback Kale Pearson threw three touchdown passes, and wide receiver Jalen Robinette threw another on a trick play. Three games later, they went to West Point with this trophy on the line. And there, the Falcons defense held Army to just six points to complete the sweep against the academies and take this trophy back to Colorado Springs.

And that was just one of a number of highlights this season. They posted big wins over Boise State and Nevada, Colorado State. When the dust settled, they finished with a 10-and-3 record, a bowl victory, an eight-win improvement from the previous season, which tied for the best turnaround in all of college football. That was quite a season right there.

So this was a total team effort, led by Kale, the team MVP, and guys like offensive lineman Michael Husar and linebacker Jordan Pierce, kicker Will Conant. And we can't forget manager Chris Woychak. [*Laughter*] Where's Chris? Where is he? There he is. [*Laughter*] Who became a cult hero with his all-out sprints to get that water bottle—[*laughter*]—into the huddle. Coach, this guy has speed. [*Laughter*] Fans started calling him Blue Bolt. We should find some sort of position, slot the guy at wideout or something—[*laughter*]—because he can move.

So this was quite a season for the Falcons. But my favorite thing about Air Force—and all

the academies who come through here—is not just that they win, it's how they win. Last year, they had the highest graduation rate in the conference. Coach recruits guys with at least a 3.5 high school GPA. As cadets, they give back to their community, and obviously, ultimately, they give back to their country.

Alongside preseason training, players complete summer service, leadership training. They volunteered for more than 500 hours at local community organizations. They've taken action to combat and prevent sexual assaults on their campus by joining with a campus organization called Cadet Athletes Against Sexual Violence, and they recorded a video similar to our "It's On Us" campaign. As defensive back Christian Spears said, he would, and I quote, "lay my life on the line for any guy up here. To say that and mean that, it's a real blessing."

And we know that for these players, it's not just words. This week, we honor the tradition of service and sacrifice that has always defined those who wear our country's uniform as we mark the 70th anniversary of V–E Day. Seventy years ago tomorrow, the world celebrated a generation of young Americans who thundered across a continent to liberate a people, young Americans who were willing to lay down their lives for people they'd never met and ideals that we can't live without. From the sands of Africa to the beachheads of Italy and Normandy to the skies over the Pacific islands, young Americans like these guys changed the course of human history and shaped the future of the entire world.

So we honor all our World War II veterans for their courage and their example. We see their character alive and well in a new generation of Americans who have stepped up to serve: the cadets behind me, the midshipmen from the Naval Academy who we've got here today and who teamed up to win this year's Cyber Defense Exercise, the soldiers and marines and coastguardsmen with whom these men will serve once they graduate, every man and every woman who stands post across the country and around the world with pride and with honor and talent and skill.

You are the ones who make the United States Armed Forces the finest fighting force in the history of the world. And as President, I have no greater honor or greater responsibility than serving as your Commander in Chief.

In the months and in the years ahead, these cadets will go on to become officers in our military. They will lead their peers, and that will call on each of you to live up to the example of those who came before you. And wherever you are stationed, I want you to know that this country stands behind you and will strive to serve you as well as you will be serving us. But in the meantime, congratulations on a great football season. [*Laughter*]

Thank you for your leadership. Thank you for your service years to come. Give it up once again to the Fighting Falcons of the Air Force Academy. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:06 p.m. in the East Room at the White House.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser in Portland, Oregon

May 7, 2015

The President. Hello, Portland! Oh, I am excited to be in Portland! Hello, hello, hello! Hello!

Audience member. I love you!

The President. I love you back!

Well, everybody, have a seat, have a seat. Make yourselves comfortable. Now, first of all, I appreciate I appreciate whoever arranged for the really excellent weather. Somebody told me it never rains in Oregon. [*Laughter*] But it is spectacular. As we were flying in, you had Mount Hood and the greenery. And I don't want to go, now that I'm here. But it turns out, I've got this job, it's really demanding. [*Laughter*] So—but I will have to come back.

It is wonderful to see all of you. Thank you so much for the extraordinary hospitality.

There are a couple of people that I want to start off by acknowledging. First of all, you've got as wonderful a congressional delegation coming out of here as anybody. And I want to start off by thanking a—your senior Member of Congress here, who has just been a great friend—one of my earliest supporters, supported me when people could not pronounce my name. [*Laughter*] And I'm so grateful to him for everything that he's done. He does a great job for you; Earl Blumenauer is here. Give—where's Earl? There he is back there.

And outstanding Member of Congress now who's really just doing great work every single day, representing your values and what you care about, Suzanne Bonamici. Give her a big round of applause. Where's Suzanne? Right here.

Kurt Schrader is traveling overseas, but give him a big round of applause anyway. We love him. And the chair of the Oregon Democratic Party, Frank Dixon, is here. Along with some outstanding college Democrats who are here in the house, the next generation!

Now, I just have fond memories of this place because—I told a number of people before I came out onstage that maybe my favorite event of the entire 2008 campaign was the rally we had here in the park along the waterfront. A lot of you were there. It was a perfect day. It was the only rally I had in which you had kayakers and—see this guy here was, "Yes, I was out there on a kayak." [*Laughter*] But it was spectacular. And I've had a soft spot for Oregon and Portland ever since.

When you think about the distance we've traveled since that time, it's pretty remarkable. Yes, I am more gray than I was at the time. [*Laughter*] So that is one, significant change, although, as I pointed out, Michelle has not changed at all. [*Laughter*] She has this special mirror in our house; she won't let me look at it. [*Laughter*] So there's some sort of pact that she's made. [*Laughter*]

So I'm a little older; I've got a few dings and dents here and there. But when we came to that rally, as beautiful as it was, as extraordinary of a day as it was, those were scary times. We were entering into what proved to be the worst financial crisis in our lifetimes. And we were losing 800,000 jobs a month. The prospects not only of Wall Street collapsing, but more importantly, Main Street collapsing, were very, very real.

And 6½ years later, because of the incredible resilience and strength and tenacity of the American people, and because so many of you worked so hard to give me the opportunity to put in place some smart policies, we are able to reverse those trends.

We've now seen 5 straight years of job growth, the longest private sector job growth in our history. The unemployment rate has gone from 10 percent to 5.5 percent. An auto industry that had flatlined is now going on all cylinders. And we are not only making some of the best cars in the world, but we're selling them all around the world.

At the time when we had that rally, a lot of folks were concerned that Washington wasn't taking seriously the imperatives of our environment and the need to grapple with climate change. And since that time, we have doubled our production of clean energy. We have increased solar energy by tenfold, wind energy by threefold, doubled fuel efficiency standards for our cars. And as a consequence, we've been able to significantly reduce the trend lines in terms of the carbon pollution that is heating the planet.

At the time that we had that extraordinary rally, there were millions of people around the country who didn't have health care at all and people who, if they lost their job, because of a preexisting condition, would not be able to get health care. And today, because of the work that you did, there are 16 million people who have health insurance that didn't have it. And everywhere in the country, if somebody has a preexisting condition, insurance companies cannot turn them away.

At the time that we fought for this, it was predicted that this would break the bank and drive our deficits up. And yet, low and behold, health care costs have actually increased at the lowest rate in 50 years. And by the way, the deficits have come down by two-thirds since I came into office.

The Recovery Act that helped us avoid a Great Depression was the biggest investment in infrastructure, the biggest investment in education, the biggest investment in green technology, the biggest investment in NIH. And as a consequence, people were put back to work, jobs were saved, and the economy started coming back.

And as we look to the future, we've initiated the kinds of reforms that are going to be critical to our future. We've revamped our student loan program so that we expanded Pell grants, allowing millions of young people who couldn't afford to go to college before to go to college. And we are now working to make sure that young people, when they are going to college, have the information they need to keep their debt levels lower and have repayment systems that allow them to make repayments in an affordable way and allow them to choose professions like teaching because they're not going to be burdened so much with debt.

At the—in terms of our younger kids, reading scores are up, high school graduation highest on record, college attendance highest on record.

And so here's the bottom line: That was a nice day in the park, but it was also a moment in which we were fighting for America's future. And America is better off because of the work that you did. America is stronger than it was; it is safer than it was. Because of what you did, there are people around this country that have jobs that didn't have it before and have health care that didn't have it before and are attending college who didn't have a chance before.

You've made a difference. And I always said back then that change doesn't come from the top, change comes from the bottom up. And the people here in Oregon, the people here in Portland are as good representatives as anybody of the power of ordinary people coming together and making a decision that they can change their country. You have brought about extraordinary change.

Now, here's the thing. We've got a lot more work to do. For all the progress that we've made, despite the fact that we ended "don't ask, don't tell" and despite the fact that we have gone after the practices of paying women differently for doing the same job and the changes that we're beginning to make in terms of our criminal justice system—despite all the reforms that we are initiating, we all know we've still got a lot of work to do. Because the fact of the matter is, is that although the economy has recovered, there are still a lot of folks out there that are hurting. Wages and incomes still aren't going up as fast as corporate profits. They're still not going up as fast as the stock market has gone up. The middle class still feels squeezed, and the ladders to get into the middle class have become scarcer for a lot of people who are willing to work hard, but can't seem to get ahead.

And so our challenge now is not just to have recovered from crisis, but now it's to seize the future and make sure we've got the kind of America that we believe in, an America in which anybody, no matter where they come from, no matter what they look like, no matter what their last name is, no matter what faith they practice, no matter who they love, that this is an America in which if you are willing to work hard and take responsibility, you can make it here in America. That's what we're fighting for. [*Applause*] That's what we're fighting for.

So what does that mean? Concretely, what are the steps that we still have to take? Well, we've still got to put more folks back to work. And we've got to make sure that folks who are working are getting paid a decent wage and have decent benefits. And that's why we're fighting so hard to make sure that we increase the minimum wage all across this country.

That's the reason why we think it's really important to have paid sick leave for people. There are 43 million people in this country who don't have it, and that's not right.

That's the reason why we're going to keep on making sure that there's equal pay for equal work all across America.

That's why, working with Earl and Suzanne and others, we need to start rebuilding our infrastructure all across this country, putting people back to work right now, rebuilding our roads and our bridges, but also our broadband

lines and creating a smart grid that can save energy and help us to curb climate change. We've still got more work to do to put people back to work.

And one of the things that we need to do to put people back to work is make sure we are accessing the markets of the future. So part of what I'm going to be doing tomorrow at Nike is talking about how important it is—95 percent of the world's markets are outside our borders. We've got the best workers in the world, the best universities in the world, the most innovative companies in the world, the best scientists and research in the world. So we are not afraid of competition. We are concerned if the playing field is not level. And that's why we've got to have the kinds of enforceable, tough, fair trade deals that are going to make sure that American workers and American businesses aren't locked out of these markets.

That's part of a middle class economic agenda, and it is a priority for us. We've got to make sure it happens.

We've got to make sure that we are training our young people for the jobs of the future. And that's why I've proposed to make sure that the first 2 years of community college in this country are free, just like public high school, so every young person can at least get that kind of start for the jobs of the future.

And for folks who still want to go on for 4 years, it's not bad having 2 years free. That will cut our debt—student debt that is such a burden on so many young people all across this country. So that's got to be a priority.

And we've got to make sure that early childhood education is our priority, because we know that young people, when they get a chance early on in life, it is the best investment we can make. Every dollar we invest in early childhood education means higher graduation rates, lower teen pregnancy rates. It means that kids are going to do better. They are going to be successful citizens. They'll pay taxes. We will get that money back. They're not going to be going straight from school to jail, they're going to be going into college, and they're going to be going into jobs. And that's the kind of America that we want. That's what we believe in.

We still got to make sure we get comprehensive immigration reform passed in this country. I couldn't be prouder of the work that we've done through executive actions to make sure that our young DREAMers—young people who were brought here as children and are Americans just like our kids, except they don't have the right documents—the notion that we would be keeping them in the shadows made no sense.

But we've got to solve that larger problem, and only Congress can do that. And you've got some great Members of Congress who understand that. Now, we've got to get all Members of Congress to understand that, and we've got to get that thing passed. It's the right thing to do. It's good for our economy, and it upholds our tradition as a nation of laws and a nation of immigrants.

We're going to have to keep—we're going to have to tackle climate change. We've got some folks in the Senate right now who think because we get a snowy day, they bring in snowballs into the Chambers and think that's science. [*Laughter*] I'm not a scientist, but I know a lot of scientists. I can understand science. And what the science says is that our planet is warming in such a way that it is going to increase drought and it is going to increase wildfires and it is going to displace millions of people around this planet and increase the severity of floods and hurricanes and it will cost lives and it will cost our way of life and it could affect the incredible natural bounty that Oregon represents. And that's not the kind of America I want to pass on to our kids and our grandkids.

That's why we're taking actions through the EPA to make sure that we cut carbon pollution that's produced from power plants. It's the right thing do.

And we're going to keep on investing in clean energy, because that is not only critical to our environmental future, but it's critical to our economic future. There are jobs to be had for those countries that are first to figure out how to harness the power of the sun and the wind and store it properly and distribute it properly. And I want that to be America. I want those jobs to be right here in the United

States. I want those jobs to be here in Oregon. That's what we're fighting for.

So we've got a lot of stuff to do. And I hope you're not tired. [*Laughter*] Because I'm not. People sometimes ask me—they ask me, you've got so much stuff on your plate. I mean, we just talked about domestic issues. Obviously, internationally, we have ended two wars, but we still have to bring about peace and help deal with situations from Ukraine to Iraq, to making sure that in places like Latin America and Asia, they continue to see America as a beacon of leadership.

So people say, Mr. President, no wonder you look so old. [*Laughter*] And they ask you, how do you just keep at it every day? And I tell them, at least once a day, I meet people who, because of the work that we did, have seen their lives transformed.

Before I came out here, there was a young man who told me that before the ACA was passed, he was paying $3,000 a month for the drugs that he needed to take every day to stay alive. And today, because of the Affordable Care Act, not only can he afford those drugs, but he knows that if he had to change jobs he'll be able to get access to what he needs. That will keep you from getting tired, hearing something like that.

Mother's Day is coming up. Yesterday I called some moms. I get these 10 letters every single day; out of 40,000 that we receive, 10 get to me. And so for Mother's Day, we decided we were just going to call, as a surprise, three moms who had written me letters. One of them was a waitress, two young kids. They had written me on President's Day, because mom was trying to teach the two boys about doing good deeds, and part of their good deed was encouraging the President of the United States. [*Laughter*]

And she wrote and took the time, along with her sons, to say, thank you for the good work you're doing. Now, here's somebody who's working on her feet every single day, undoubtedly underpaid, then having to come home and look after a couple kids, took the time to say thank you to me. I can't afford to be tired, because I want to make sure that she's getting the kind of wages and benefits that she deserves. And if she gets sick, I want to make sure that she can stay home. And if her kids get sick, I want to make sure that she can look after them and not lose a day's pay. That's why I'm not tired. We've got work to do.

The young man in college who comes to me and says, you know, I—as a gay teen, I was bullied and thought about suicide, and seeing all the changes that have taken place and the recognition and the acceptance and the love that we've seen sweep across this country has made such a big difference in my life. That's why I don't get tired, because I want that young man to feel loved.

Those wounded warriors who I see at Walter Reed, some of them lost a leg, some of them lost two. And then, 6 months or 8 months or a year later, they come into the White House, walking on their new legs, and looking me in the eye, standing up straight and shaking my hand. And I think about the sacrifices that they've made and realize that we've got to serve them just as well as they have served us. That's why I don't get tired.

So—but here's the thing, Democrats. I can't do it alone. And I've run my last election. Michelle is very happy about that. [*Laughter*] But that doesn't mean I stop fighting.

I think it was Brandeis who said, the most important office in a democracy is not the President, not a Senator or Governor or mayor, it's the office of citizen. And what was represented at that park back in 2008 here in Portland, that was people holding office. That was people holding the office of citizen and saying that we are joining together to make sure that America is living up to the ideals that we care about so deeply.

Pretty soon, I'm going to be a citizen myself, not just a President. I'll be alongside you. And we're going to have to make sure that we keep people like Earl and Suzanne, make sure that we've got a Democratic President and a Democratic House and a Democratic Senate. We've got to make sure that we are fighting for the things that we believe in so that when we look back 10 years from now or 20 years from now or 30 years from now,

or when our children and grandchildren look back, they can say that we were part of that incredible race that has been run and we took the baton and we carried it forward to make this a more just, more prosperous, more secure, more tolerant, more generous, more loving nation.

That's what we're fighting for. I'm going to need you, Democrats. Not just today, not just next week or next year, but as long as you hold that incredible office of citizen.

Thank you very much, everybody. I love you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:56 p.m. at the Sentinel hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Coon Rapids, MN, resident Stephanie Tarr and her children Kai and Kenny Jones; Tucson, AZ, resident Dawn Miller; and Ormond Beach, FL, resident Patricia Church. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the audio was incomplete.

The President's Weekly Address
May 8, 2015

Hello, everybody. Today marks a historic anniversary: 70 years since the Allied victory in Europe during World War II. On V–E Day after the Nazi surrender, people swarmed the streets of London and Paris and Moscow, and the cloud of fear that had hung for so many years finally lifted. Here at home, from small towns to Times Square, crowds gathered in celebration, singing and dancing with joy. It would still be 3 more months of deadly fighting in the Pacific. But for a few hours, the world rejoiced in the hope of peace.

General Eisenhower announced the news with little fanfare. "The mission of this Allied Force," he said, "was fulfilled." But his simple message belied the extraordinary nature of the Allied victory and the staggering human loss. For over 5 years, brutal fighting laid waste to an entire continent. Mothers, fathers, children were murdered in concentration camps. By the time the guns fell silent in Europe, some 40 million people on the continent had lost their lives.

Today we pay tribute to all who served. They were patriots, like my grandfather who served in Patton's army: soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, coast guard, merchant marines, and the women of the WACs and the WAVES and every branch. They risked their lives and gave their lives so that we, and people the world over, could live free. They were women who stepped up in unprecedented numbers, manning the home front and, like my grandmother, building bombers on assembly lines.

This was the generation that literally saved the world: that ended the war and laid a foundation for peace. This was the generation that traded in their uniforms for a college education so they could marry their sweethearts, buy homes, raise children, and build the strongest middle class the world has ever known. This was the generation that includes heroes like the Tuskegee Airmen, the Navajo Code Talkers, and the Japanese Americans of the forty—hundred forty-second [442d]* Regiment, and who continued the fight for freedom here at home, expanding equality and opportunity and justice for minorities and women.

We will be forever grateful for what these remarkable men and women did, for the selfless grace they showed in one of our darkest hours. But as we mark this 70th anniversary, let's not simply commemorate history, let's rededicate ourselves to the freedoms for which they fought.

Let's make sure that we keep striving to fulfill our founding ideals: that we're a country where no matter who we are or where we're from or what we look like or who we love, if we work hard and take responsibility, every American will have the opportunity to make of our lives what we will.

* White House correction.

Let's stand united with our allies, in Europe and beyond, on behalf of our common values—freedom, security, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law around the world—and against bigotry and hatred in all their forms so that we give meaning to that pledge: "Never forget. Never again."

Most of all, let's salute once more that generation of Americans whose courage and sacrifice are the reason we're here today, in peace and freedom. Their spirit lives on in our brave men and women in uniform and their families who continue to defend the very freedoms our parents and grandparents fought for. As Americans grateful for their service, let's truly honor them, on this day and every day, with the gratitude they have earned and the respect that they deserve.

May God bless them, and may he continue to bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 2:45 p.m. on May 7 in the Map Room at the White House for broadcast on May 8. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 7, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on May 8.

Remarks at Nike World Headquarters in Beaverton, Oregon
May 8, 2015

The President. Hello, Oregon! Well, who arranged this day? Every time I come to Oregon this is what it looks like. [*Laughter*]

Audience member. Come more often!

The President. Yes! Then, I'll—it never rains in Oregon, does it?

Audience members. No!

The President. Never.

Audience member. Don't come to California. [*Laughter*]

The President. All right. Well, listen, it is wonderful to see all of you. First of all, please give Mark another round of applause for his hospitality. And thanks to everyone at Nike for hosting us today, here in "Federer Platz." [*Laughter*] You know, the White House is cool. [*Laughter*] We've got a basketball court. Actually, it's a tennis court that we repainted some lines—[*laughter*]—when I came into office. So it's a combination basketball-tennis court. There is a putting green that President Eisenhower put in. Can you imagine, by the way, if I had put in a putting green? [*Laughter*] Things have changed. [*Laughter*]

But you've got all that and the 18th tee box from Pebble Beach. Come on. I'm sure some of my staff is running around right now in the Michael Jordan and Mia Hamm buildings. [*Laughter*] They want to be lab rats for your new gear. [*Laughter*]

But it is wonderful to be here. Please give it up for two people who fight every single day for Oregon workers, your Representatives in Congress—they do a great job—Earl Blumenauer and Suzanne Bonamici. They are both here. Give them a big round of applause. Yay! And there are two people who couldn't make it here today, but they're doing a great job, and you should give them a round of applause as well, and that's Senator Ron Wyden and Representative Kurt Schrader.

So it is great to be at the world headquarters of such an iconic company, a company that helps athletes succeed from the individual to the world stage. And as you've heard, I've come to Oregon to talk a little bit about trade—which initially may have had some people thinking, what, is Mariota going someplace that we didn't know about? Or—[*laughter*]. He's going to be great. He's an outstanding young man. He's going to be terrific—and from Hawaii, by the way. [*Laughter*] Right on. Local boy. [*Laughter*]

But this is important, and I want to tell you why I think trade deals and our willingness to go out there and compete on the global stage is so important.

Before I came out here, I had a chance to meet with some small-business owners from across Oregon, whose workers make everything from bikes to tea to stationery to wine.

And they know how important this is to them. Sometimes, when we talk about trade, we think of Nike, or we think of Boeing, or we think of GE. We think about these big multinational companies. But those small-business leaders came here today because they understood that these markets outside the United States will help them grow and will help them hire more folks, just as all the suppliers to Nike or Boeing or GE or any of these other companies understand this is going to be critical to their growth and their ability to create new jobs. In fact, that's why Ron Wyden is not here, because he's in Washington, DC, as we speak quarterbacking this effort on behalf of Oregon's small-business owners and workers.

Now, small businesses are the backbone of our economy. Eventually, like Nike, they grow sometimes into really, really big companies. They employ millions of people. Ninety-eight percent of exporters are small businesses. They're the ones who made—make "Made in Oregon" and "Made in the U.S.A." mean something. And they represent something essential about this country, the notion that if you've got a good idea and you're willing to work at it, you can turn that idea into a business, you can grow that business; eventually, who knows what might happen. You can give other people a chance to earn a living even as you do well. That's America's promise. And it's up to us to keep that promise alive.

Now, that promise was threatened for almost everybody just about 7 years ago, when the economy nearly collapsed and millions of Americans lost their jobs and their homes and their life savings. But thanks to the hard work of the American people and entrepreneurs like the ones who are here today—and some pretty good policies from my administration—[*laughter*]—we're in a different place today. [*Applause*] We're in a different place today.

This morning we learned that our economy created 223,000 new jobs last month. The unemployment rate ticked down again to 5.4 percent, which is the lowest it's been in almost 7 years. That's 3 million new jobs over the past 12 months, nearly the fastest pace in over a decade. And all told, over the past 62 months in a row, America's businesses have created 12.3 million new jobs.

I should add, by the way, 62 months ago is when I signed the Affordable Care Act. So, obviously, it hasn't done too bad in terms of employment in this country. I just thought I'd mention that. Since there were a lot of predictions of doom and gloom, I would just suggest, those who were making those predictions go back and check the statistics. [*Laughter*] Just saying. [*Laughter*]

So small businesses deserve a lot of credit for that. In fact, over the past several years, small businesses have created nearly two out of every three new American jobs. And the question is, how do we build on that success? We've got to be relentless in our efforts to support small businesses who are creating jobs and helping to grow the economy.

And that's been the purpose behind many of the policies I've fought for as President. I've cut taxes for small businesses more than a dozen times. I've pushed for investments in infrastructure and faster Internet. It's why we've made health care more accessible, affordable, portable, to give people the freedom to change jobs or launch that startup without worrying about losing their health insurance.

And passing trade agreements is part of that agenda if those trade agreements are the right kinds of trade agreements; if they make sure that they're growing our businesses and helping American workers by selling goods made in America across the rest of the world. And I've been talking a lot about this lately, because I view smart trade agreements as a vital piece of middle class economics. Not a contradiction to middle class economics, it's a part and parcel of it.

I believe that our country does best when everyone gets a fair shot, everyone does their fair share, everybody plays by the same set of rules. And that means making sure everybody has got a good education. It means making sure that women are getting paid the same as men for doing the same work. It means making sure that folks have to have sick leave and family leave and that they can balance work and family in a fair way. It means, working to

increase the minimum wage all across this country, because folks who have some of the toughest jobs oftentimes get the lowest pay.

That's all part of middle economics—middle class economics, but you know what, so is trade. We strive to make sure our own economy lives up to high standards, but in a lot of parts of the world, the rules are unfair. The playing field is uneven. That puts American businesses and American workers at a disadvantage. So the question is, what should we do about it?

Some folks think we should just withdraw and not even try to engage in trade with these countries. I disagree. We have to make sure America writes the rules of the global economy. And we should do it today, while our economy is in the position of global strength. Because if we don't write the rules for trade around the world, guess what? China will. And they'll write those rules in a way that gives Chinese workers and Chinese businesses the upper hand and locks American-made goods out.

That's the choice we face. We're not going to be able to isolate ourselves from world markets. We've got to be in there and compete. And the question is, are we going to make sure that the rules are fair so that our businesses and our workers are on a level playing field? Because when they are, we win every time. When the rules are fair, we win every time.

So this is why I'm such a strong supporter of new trade agreements. They're going to help our workers compete and our businesses compete. This is not a left issue or a right issue or a business or a labor issue. It is about fairness and equity and access. And like other issues that we've waged slow, steady fights on over the last 7 years, this is also a question of the past versus the future.

So the Trans-Pacific Partnership that we're working on—it's the biggest trade deal that we're working on right now—has to do with the Asia-Pacific region. And it reflects our values in ways that, frankly, some previous trade agreements did not. It's the highest standard, most progressive trade deal in history. It's got strong, enforceable provisions for workers, preventing things like child labor. It's got strong, enforceable provisions on the environment, helping us to do things that haven't been done before: to prevent wildlife trafficking or deforestation or dealing with our oceans. And these are enforceable in the agreement.

And Nike operates in the Pacific region, so they understand the competitive pressures they're under. Nike has factories all around the world. And let's face it—Mark I think doesn't mind me saying it—that some of these countries, they don't have the standards for wages and labor conditions that we have here.

So when you look at a country like Vietnam, under this agreement, Vietnam would actually, for the first time, have to raise its labor standards. It would have to set a minimum wage. It would have to pass safe workplace laws to protect its workers. It would even have to protect workers' freedom to form unions for the very first time. That would make a difference. That helps to level the playing field. And it would be good for the workers in Vietnam, even as it helps make sure that they're not undercutting competition here in the United States.

So that's progress. It doesn't mean that suddenly, working conditions in Vietnam will be like they are here at Nike—[*laughter*]—or here in Portland right away. But it moves us in the right direction. And if Vietnam or any of the other countries in this trade agreement don't meet these requirements, they'll face meaningful consequences. If you're a country that wants in to this agreement, you have to meet higher standards. If you don't, you're out. If you break the rules, there are actual repercussions. And that's good for American businesses and American workers, because we already meet higher standards than most of the rest of the world, and that helps level the playing field.

And this deal would strengthen our hand overseas by giving us the tools to open other markets to our goods and services and make sure they play by the fair rules we help write. The truth is, we have one of the most open markets in the world. Folks are already selling stuff here. We've got to be able to sell there. That requires us to enter into trade agreements to open up their markets.

I hear Oregon wine is actually pretty good. [*Laughter*] Somebody told me that the pinot noir in Oregon is top notch, right? I've got some winemakers right here. Well, I want to make sure Japanese wine consumers have the opportunity to partake—[*laughter*]—in a excellent Oregon wine. We've got some Oregon beef producers and ranchers around here. I—beef is really expensive in Japan. Let's make sure they try some Oregon steaks. It's good stuff.

And that's one of the best things that can happen for our businesses and our workers: opening up markets that have previously been closed, particularly markets where they're already selling stuff here. There's a lack of reciprocity. It's not a fair deal right now. We want to make it fairer.

Now, I want to acknowledge—because this looks like a very well read and informed crowd—[*laughter*]—that there have been a bunch of critics about trade deals generally and the Trans-Pacific Partnership. And what's interesting is, typically, they're my friends, coming from my party, and they're my fellow travelers on minimum wage and on job training and on clean energy. And on every progressive issue, they're right there with me. And then, on this one, they're, like, whooping on me. [*Laughter*]

But I tell you what: I've run my last election, and the only reason I do something is because I think it's good for American workers and the American people and the American economy. I don't have any other rationale for doing what I do than that I think it's the best thing for the American people. And on this issue, on trade, I actually think some of my dearest friends are wrong. They're just wrong. And here's why.

First of all, they say that this trade agreement will cost American jobs. And they're really basing this on some past experience, looking at what happened in the nineties, over the last 20 years, as there was a lot of outsourcing going on. And you know what, past trade agreements, it's true, didn't always reflect our values or didn't always do enough to protect American workers. But that's why we're designing a different kind of trade deal

And the truth is that companies that only care about low wages, they've already moved. They don't need new trade deals to move. They've already outsourced. They've already located in search of low wages.

What this trade agreement would do is open the doors to the higher skill, higher wage jobs of the future, jobs that we excel at. It would make sure our manufacturers who are operating at the higher end of the value chain are able to access these growing markets. And the fact is, over the past few years, our manufacturers have been steadily creating jobs for the first time since the 1990s, under my administration. After more than a decade away from the top spot, business leaders around the world have declared the United States is the world's number-one place to invest for a third year in a row. [*Applause*] Third year in a row.

So the point is, outsourcing is already giving way to insourcing. Companies are starting to move back here to do more advanced manufacturing, and this is a trend we expect to continue. This trade deal would help that.

Just this morning, as Mark may have mentioned, Nike announced that, with the Trans-Pacific Partnership, it will make new investments in advanced manufacturing, not overseas, but right here in the United States. And far more Nike products would be made in the U.S.A. And that means thousands of new jobs in manufacturing and engineering and design at Nike facilities across the country and potentially tens of thousands of new jobs along Nike's supply chain here at home. That's what trade can do.

Look, I've spent 6½ years trying to rescue this economy, 6½ years of trying to revitalize American manufacturing, including rescuing an American auto industry that was on its back and is now fully recovered. So I would not risk any of that if I thought the trade deals were going to undermine it. The reason I'm for this is because I think it will enhance it and advance it. So that's point number one.

Point number two: When you ask folks specifically, "What do you oppose about this trade deal?" they just say "NAFTA." [*Laughter*] NAFTA was passed 20 years ago. That was a

different agreement. And in fact, this agreement fixes some of what was wrong with NAFTA by making labor and environmental provisions actually enforceable. I was just getting out of law school when NAFTA got passed. [*Laughter*]

Number three, you've got some critics saying that any deal would be rushed through; it's a secret deal, people don't know what's in it. This is not true. [*Laughter*] Any agreement that we finalize with the other 11 countries will have to be posted online for at least 60 days before I even sign it. Then, it would go to Congress, and you know they're not going to do anything fast. [*Laughter*] So there will be months of review. Every "t" crossed, every "i" dotted. Everybody is going to be able to see exactly what's in it.

There's nothing fast-track about this. This is a very deliberate track—[*laughter*]—which will be fully subject to scrutiny. And I'm confident when people read the agreement for themselves, they'll see that this is the most progressive trade deal in history.

Number four, critics warn that parts of this deal would undermine American regulation: food safety, worker safety, even financial regulations. This is—they're making this stuff up. This is just not true. No trade agreement is going to force us to change our laws. This agreement would make sure our companies aren't discriminated against in other countries.

We already treat companies from other countries fairly here. But our companies don't always get treated fairly there. So sometimes, they need to have some way to settle disputes where it's not subject to the whims of some government bureaucrat in that country. That's important. We want our businesses to succeed in selling over there because that's how our workers will get more jobs here in the United States.

And then, finally, some critics talk about currency manipulation. Now, this has been a problem in the past. Some countries, they try to lower their currency so that it makes their goods cheaper, makes our more expensive. There was a time when China was pretty egregious about this. When I came into office, I started pounding on them. Every time I'd meet with them, I'd be talking about currency. And we pushed back hard, and China moved. In real terms, their currency has appreciated about 30 percent since I came into office. And we're going to keep on going after it. But that's not an argument against this trade agreement. If we give up the chance to help our businesses sell their stuff in the world's fastest growing markets, that doesn't do anything to stop currency manipulation.

So the fact is, some folks are just opposed to trade deals out of principle, a reflexive principle. And what I tell them is, you know what, if you're opposed to these smart, progressive trade deals, then that means you must be satisfied with the status quo. And the status quo hasn't been working for our workers. It hasn't been working for our businesses. And there are people here who will tell you why.

I'm going to just give you a couple of examples of small businesses who I had a chance to meet with today. Egg Press, it's a Portland-based greeting card company, really nice. They sell their cards in Australia, which is a member of this Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement. Their CEO, Tess Darrow—where's Tess? Raise your hand. I saw her. There she is. So Tess says that if they could more easily reach customers in Japan as well, they'd sell half the volume that they do here in America. That's a lot.

Right now the logistics of exporting to Japan are too complicated. Products end up being held up for months at the border. This agreement would help solve some of those problems so Tess can sell more greeting cards in Japan, presumably in Japanese. [*Laughter*] Right? Is there going to be—there will be a translation process, I assume. Yes, absolutely. I'm teasing. [*Laughter*] Okay.

So the trade deal would help eliminate barriers and simplify customs and hold countries accountable for getting products delivered swiftly. The more Tess sells, the more she can grow, the more she can hire here in Oregon, here in the United States.

Oregon Fruit Products—makes canned fruits, berries, other products—depends on ex-

ports for 20 percent of its annual sales. Right now it exports to four members of this partnership that we're putting together: Japan, Australia, Singapore, and Canada. Unfortunately, selling in these countries right now can mean dealing with unfair rules designed to prevent our products from being offered in their markets. Under this agreement, that would change. Exporting becomes simpler, more consistent. That means more people around the world eating Oregon berries all year long. Berry tasty.

Sokol Blosser Winery—[*applause*]—oh, we've got a lot of drinkers here. [*Laughter*] This is a winery, family run in Dayton, Oregon. One of its top export markets is Japan. Right now there are high tariffs on American wine in that country. Under this trade partnership, those tariffs would be eliminated, and wineries across America could see their sales grow overseas. The brother-and-sister team that runs this vineyard—wave, guys—they say, "If we can make it easier to do business with countries that are already our trading partners, countries that are allies, that's a good thing."

They're right. This deal would be a good thing. So let's "just do it." [*Laughter*] It took a while for you to catch that, didn't you? [*Laughter*] I thought that was pretty obvious. [*Laughter*]

So listen, I know a lot of folks who are skeptical about trade. Past trade deals didn't always live up to the hype. Labor and environmental protections weren't always strong enough. I saw for years, in Chicago and towns across Illinois, manufacturing collapsing, jobs drying up. Outsourcing is real. Folks didn't just make that up. Some of our manufacturing base shifted over the last 25 years, and it wasn't good for manufacturing, and it wasn't good for those communities, and it wasn't good for workers. That's the truth. It had benefits. Other jobs were created; we got cheaper goods. But there was real displacement and real pain. And so for many Americans, this is not an abstraction, this is real.

But we've got to learn the right lessons from that. The lesson is not that we pull up the drawbridge and build a moat around ourselves. The lesson is, is that we've got to make sure that the trade deals that we do shape are ones that allow us to compete fairly.

So when I took office, I decided we could rethink the way we do trade in a way that actually works for working Americans. I didn't think this was the right thing to do just for companies. If I didn't think this was the right thing to do for working families, I would not be fighting for it. If any agreement undercuts working families, I won't sign it. I ran for office to expand opportunity for everybody, the all-American idea that no matter who you are or where you come from or how you started out or who you love, in America, you can make it if you try.

So yes, we should be mindful of the past, but we can't ignore the realities of the new economy. We can't stand on the beaches and stop the global economy at our shores. We've got to harness it on our terms. This century is built for us. It's about innovation. It's about dynamism and flexibility and entrepreneurship and information and knowledge and science and research. That's us. So we can't be afraid of it; we've got to seize it. We've got to give every single American who wakes up, sends their kids to school, rolls up their sleeves, punches in every day the chance to do what they do best: dream up, innovate, build, sell the best products and ideas in the world to every corner of the world.

Because, Nike, we do not just have the best athletes in the world. We also have the best workers in the world. We also have the best businesses in the world. And when the playing field is level, nobody beats the United States of America. Nobody beats the United States of America.

Just do it, everybody. Thank you. God bless you. Thank you, Oregon. Thank you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:44 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Mark G. Parker, chief executive officer, Nike, Inc.; Michael Jordan, former guard, National Basketball Association's Chicago Bulls; Mia Hamm, former forward, U.S. women's soccer team; Marcus Mariota, former quarterback, University of Oregon football team; and Alex and Allison Sokol Blosser, copresidents, Sokol Blosser Winery.

Commencement Address at Lake Area Technical Institute in Watertown, South Dakota

May 8, 2015

Thank you so much. Thank you. Congratulations. Thank you so much. Thank you. Everybody, please have a seat. Well, hello, Watertown! It's good to be in South Dakota. I want to thank Governor Daugaard and the First Lady. Apparently, Michelle and her, they're on the same wave length when it comes to keeping us straight. [*Laughter*] To Senator Thune, Senator Rounds, Congresswoman Noem, Mayor Thorson, Superintendent Dr. Lesli Jutting—all of you for your extraordinary hospitality.

I am thrilled to be here. I have now been to all 50 States as President, and I was saving the best for last. To the other 49, I hope you take no offense. [*Laughter*] I will say that your tourism secretary sent me a very impressive letter listing all the South Dakota sites that I still need to see. [*Laughter*] And they looked great, but I decided that the first one I needed to see was Lake Area Tech.

So, President Cartney, thank you and the people of Watertown for welcoming me. To the students, the faculty, the staff, I'm honored to be with you here today. And most of all, congratulations to the class of 2015!

I know some folks were a little surprised by me coming here. But there is no place I'd rather be on this Friday afternoon than celebrating with all of you. Although, I was told I should head home before any of my staff end up at the "gravel pit" tonight. [*Laughter*] That's what I was told.

I want to begin with a public service announcement. As long as you keep your school ID, you can still get your Sunday night student discount at B-Dubs. [*Laughter*] I had my staff check on that. And I think it may go down in history as one of my more popular executive actions. [*Laughter*]

So after a whole lot of work, you have a whole lot to celebrate this weekend. This is a proud moment, and not just for you wearing the funny hats, but for your friends and your family and your mentors, your instructors who helped you to reach this day. So let's give the family members and all the people who helped get you here, let's give them a big round of applause.

And I actually spend a lot of time with a community college professor whose name is Dr. Jill Biden. She happens to be Joe Biden's wife. She teaches English full time at a community college in Virginia. So I know how great your instructors can be. And I want to thank one of them in particular. So Dolores Stemwedel was scheduled to speak today. Where is she? I saw her earlier. There she is. She graciously agreed to wait until next year so that I could cut in. [*Laughter*] And I had a chance to meet her. She was completely charming. And I have to say, you guys missed out. She's really good.

Of course, Dolores was not the only one who was surprised to learn that I had asked to speak at your commencement. When President Cartney told his staff the news, apparently no one believed him. [*Laughter*] And Shane Ortmeier, your bookstore manager, said he blacked out for a minute. [*Laughter*] Alexis Stinton, an instructor in your Ag program, said her first thought was: "That's the funniest joke in the world. We're just a tiny little school in this little tiny town." [*Laughter*]

And look, she's right. This is a small school in a small town, in a State that is wonderful, but not a huge population. There are schools out there with more students than this one. There are schools with more resources and more history and more name recognition. And frankly, there are schools with stadiums that could fit all of this county nearly four times over. [*Laughter*]

So the question is, why am I here? Well, you started to hear the answer earlier from the previous speakers. Why would I come to a 2-year college in the fifth-biggest city in South Dakota? Well, the reason is because I believe that in a fast-paced, hyperconnected, constantly changing world, there are few institutions that

are more important to America's economic future than community colleges. And there are few community colleges that are as important as Lake Area Tech. This school is leading the way.

Compared with other community colleges, the graduation rate at Lake Area is more than three times the national average. Three times. Within 6 months, 98 percent of those graduates—you—are either employed or continuing your education. The average Lake Area graduate who enters the workforce earns nearly 50-percent more than other new hires in this region. And as has already been noted, since 2011, there's been an award for excellence called the "Aspen Prize." It's basically the Oscars for great community colleges. Only two community colleges in the country made the top 10 every year the prize has been awarded, and one of them is Lake Area Tech.

So this is not an accident. It's the result of a relentless focus on teaching real-world skills that lead directly to a job. In your time here, you've done hands-on work with companies across the upper Midwest. Employers even help design the curriculum. You work direct with the tools and the technology that you'll encounter in the workforce, from car engines to welding equipment to your new MakerSpace, with 3–D printers that were actually built by Lake Area students. And your instructors haven't just taught you new skills, they've helped place you in new careers.

You might think all this attention on job training comes at the expense of great teaching, but if anything, the opposite is true. This is the kind of place where students are on a first-name basis with their instructors. If you call at 10 p.m., they'll answer your call, although I hope you don't do that, because folks need their sleep. If you don't make it to morning classes, they'll check up on you and make sure you're okay. I heard one student who skipped school to go hunting found that out the hard way that somebody was going to check up on you. [*Laughter*] One of today's graduates, Colin Blume—where's Colin? Raise your hand. Stand up, Colin, just so you—hey, that's Colin. Colin is a big guy, by the way. So Colin—I'm going to quote Colin on this. He said, "You're family, and they'll do anything to help you along the way."

And that sense of mission has been part of Lake Area since this school was founded 50 years ago. And today, it matters even more, that sense that we're a family and that we'll do anything to help each other along the way.

Class of 2015, you're about to graduate into an economy that is fundamentally different than the one that faced the first class of Lake Area graduates over a half-century ago. You've seen a lot of the perils of this economy firsthand: how good jobs and entire industries can vanish or be shipped overseas; how a crisis, because of some of irresponsible folks on Wall Street, can punish families on Main Street with one of the most vicious recessions in our country's history.

So it would be easy to just throw up your hands and say: "What hope does a place like Watertown have in a global economy? What place does somebody like me have in today's job market?" But instead of looking backwards, you looked forward. You saw doors of opportunity waiting to be opened. And you decided that community college would be your key to unlocking those doors.

Some of you came to Lake Area because you knew exactly what you wanted to do with your lives and you saw that education could earn your way to get started as quickly as possible. And Colin, the young man who said this school was like a family, turned a high school welding project into a business when he was 16 years old. At 18, he was awarded a patent for creating a new type of grain-handling cage. And today, at the ripe old age of 20—[*laughter*]—he's graduating with a degree in Ag production, a new contract to manufacture continuous fencing in the shop on his family farm, and who knows how many jobs he's going to end up creating. That's the kind of future-oriented focus that we're seeing in today's graduates. And the instructors here helped him make it happen. So we're really proud of you.

But Colin is not the only. From the time she was an infant, Maysa Hackens has been blind in her right eye, and she has only 75-percent

vision in her left. Where—is she here? Maysa? Come on, stand up. There you go. There you go. So Maysa is not as tall as Colin. [*Laughter*] But in high school, she discovered a passion that most people might not expect somebody with her vision issues to be able to pursue photography. And she was really good at it. And she found that Lake Area would give her the chance to complete both a business degree and a photography degree in just 2 years. So now she's going back home, to New Underwood, to run her own business. It's called "How 'Eye' See It Photography." And she's got a website, and she's got a business plan. That's the kind of initiative that built this country. And a little free advertising from the President doesn't help—it doesn't hurt. [*Laughter*] Hopefully, folks were paying attention.

So community colleges like this one can be a great place for young people to launch a career. But they're also a great place for people who have already been in the workforce for a while and decide they need to change their careers and reach for something better.

So Leanna Waldner—where's Leanna? Come on, don't be shy. She's here somewhere. There she is. Wow. Leanna, you stood up and sat down before I could even see you. [*Laughter*] Where are you? Come on, stand up. There you are. There you go. So Leanna grew right—grew up right here in Watertown. She dropped out of high school. By age 20, she was working as a waitress, supporting two beautiful baby girls, Lizzie and Farrah, on her own. And that touches me, because I was raised by a single mom with the help of my grandparents.

So after years of low-paying jobs, Leanna decided she needed to go back to school. And it wasn't easy. Some nights, Lizzie would be doing her homework at one end of the kitchen table, and Mom would be doing her homework at the other end. And Leanna says, "I didn't think I'd ever be in that position to walk across that stage and get a diploma." But here she is, about to walk across this stage and earn her financial services degree. And I know there are two little girls here today that are really, really proud of their mom. Setting a great example.

And then, some of you came to Lake Area Tech because you'd already begun a great career, in the bravest way possible. And you figured with a few new skills, you could take the next step. Tech Sergeant Joe Wiskur joined the Navy right before 9/11. Where's Joe? In 2005, he enlisted in the South Dakota Air National Guard. He helped organize air operations over four deployments overseas, earned two commendation medals for his service. But Joe's mentors told him that if he wanted to keep climbing the chain of command, he needed more than a high school degree. So he came to Lake Area to study aviation maintenance technology. Joe's next deployment is shortly after graduation. But this time, he's hoping to be training the airmen who used to do his old job.

And Sergeant Wiskur is one of 35 servicemembers and veterans graduating from Lake Area Tech today. And as your Commander in Chief, I could not be prouder of you. And I ask everyone to stand and recognize these men and women for their service. Thank you.

So stories like Joe's and Leanna's and Maysa's and Colin's, they are our proof that community colleges like this one are vital paths to the middle class for millions of Americans. In just 2 years, schools like this can change lives, change careers, grow our economy. They can change our country.

All of us are better off when our businesses have access to the best trained workers in the world. All of us are better off when entrepreneurs like Colin and Maysa can boost their hometown economies and make it more attractive for young people to stay. All of us are better off when a parent like Leanna can make ends meet and provide for her kids. All of us are better off when a patriot like Joe can keep serving his country.

So that's why I came here today, to this little tiny school in this little tiny town. I didn't come here to inspire you. I came here because you, the graduates, inspire me. That's why I came here. You have lived through some of the toughest economic times in your country's history, and you still chose to came here—come here and invest in yourself, because you still believe that America is a place where you can

make it if you try. That's what hope is, the belief that even if today is hard, with a little hard work, there's something better around the bend.

And it is that promise that has always set this country apart. It's the idea that through hard work and through sacrifice, each of us can pursue our individual dreams, but we still come together as one American family to ensure that the next generation can pursue their dreams as well; that we take responsibility for looking after our own kids, but we're also thinking about somebody else's kids; that if we got a good break and did well, you know what, we're going to turn around and make sure that somebody else gets a break too. It's the idea, as Colin said, that we're a family and we'll do anything to help each other along. And we know that if we're helping somebody else, at some point we may need help too.

Now, I doubt all this was on your mind when you celebrated "Thirsty Thursday" last night. [*Laughter*] But as President, it's my job to think about this stuff. And I think the time you spent here was not only an investment in yourself, but a true act of faith in your country as well.

And that's why I think the country should return the favor. We should have faith in people like you. We should invest in people like you. Our budgets should reflect that we care about you.

That means giving everybody in America the same chance you have here, the chance to earn new skills that lead directly to a good job. And this is an idea that has united philanthropists and companies and educators around a common mission. And at a moment when our politics sometimes can seem really divided, this is an idea that actually has some bipartisan support. From the Republican Governor of Tennessee to the Democratic mayor of Chicago, leaders across our country are laying out plans to put a college education within reach for everybody.

And I'm proud of what we've done to expand Pell grants and the fact that so many young people here are recipients of Pell grants. Because when I came into office, not as many folks were getting them. And I'm proud of what we've done to try to keep interest rates low on student loans. But we can do more than what we're doing.

That's why this year, in my State of the Union Address, inspired by a letter I received from a hard-working mom like Leanna, I put forward a proposal of my own. I want to lower the cost of community college in America to zero. I want to make it as easy to go to community college as it is to graduate from high school, if you're willing to work hard.

Now, I know some of you graduates are wishing we could go back in time and make the last 2 years free. [*Laughter*] I get it. I do too. But if folks in Congress decide to make this a priority, we could do the next best thing and make community college free for an entire generation of young Americans, as long as they're willing to work: keep their grades up, be responsible, graduate on time. And we could pay for it by closing just one loophole for millionaires and billionaires. Just one. Just one tax loophole enjoyed almost entirely by very few at the top, we could offer a quality education to millions of middle class Americans. It's in everybody's interest.

We live in a 21st-century economy that rewards knowledge and innovation like never before. So as a country, we can't afford to let any striving American be priced out of the education they need to get ahead. For everybody willing to work for it, we need to make 2 years of community college as free and universal as high school is today. It's the right thing to do. [*Applause*] It's the right thing to do.

And you know, if that seems pie in the sky, just remember, 4 years of free high school was once hard to imagine, until we as a country decided to give every child that chance. Helping veterans go to college on the GI bill was hard to imagine, until we decided our returning heroes deserved nothing less. Pell grants for lower income students were hard to imagine, until we decided that by investing in their future, we were investing in our own.

That's part of what makes America exceptional. We are family, and we'll do anything to

help each other along the way. That's what Colin said.

That brings me back to Alexis Stinton, your instructor who wondered why I would ask to come to this tiny little school, this little tiny town. Where's Alexis, by the way? There she is, over there. You see, back in 2007, Alexis owned a small dog-grooming business. And her husband Nathaniel worked construction. And one day, misfortune hit, and Nathaniel got injured, and he had to leave his job. And then the recession hit, and her small business struggled. "It was so overwhelming and such a low point for us," Alexis said, "I knew I was at a point where life needed to change." And this is the place where it did.

First, Nathaniel enrolled here. He earned a degree from the lab technician program. Today, he works in quality control at the Baby Bel Cheese factory over in Brookings. The next semester, Alexis enrolled here. And she was such a good student that even before she finished her Ag degree, she was asked to help teach classes. And "Lake Area Tech has turned both of our lives around," Alexis says. And today, her life work is to help other students make the same journey. "It's gratifying," she says, "when someone finds their path."

Graduates, I hope that's something you keep in mind as you walk across the stage today, that gratification that comes from helping someone find their path; for making yourself useful not just to yourself, but to others. For you haven't just earned new opportunities with this degree; you've also earned responsibilities along with it.

And, Colin and Maysa, as you open your small business, don't forget to be those entrepreneurs who give back to the communities that gave you so much. Leanna, as you build a better future for your kids, teach them that every child deserves the chance they had, even if they aren't lucky enough to have a mom like you. Joe and all the other graduates here today: Never settle. Keep climbing that ladder of success as you're doing it. Reach back to help other strive to be the best they can be.

That's who we are as Americans. We are rugged individuals. We haven't lost that pioneering spirit that brought many of our grandparents and great-grandparents to these plains. We ask for nothing more than the chance to blaze our own trail. And yet each of us is only here because somebody, somewhere, helped us find our path.

Which brings me to one last story. It's a story about a boy who was born more than a hundred years ago in Wallace, South Dakota, about 25 miles from here. His family didn't have much. But they were able to give him an education because he was part of that first generation of Americans to grow up in a country that believed high school should be available for everybody. And after high school, that boy went on to graduate college, and then he became a teacher, and then he became a mayor, and then he became a Senator. At the time Lake Area was founded, Hubert Humphrey was Vice President of the United States. But he never once forgot what made his American story possible. "The road to freedom," he said, "here and everywhere on Earth, begins in the classroom." The road to freedom begins in the classroom.

So, class of 2015, you have earned the chance to walk the road to freedom and to make of your lives what you will, to write that next great chapter in our American story. And your path will not always be easy, and your way forward will not always be clear. But you have worked hard for this moment. And if you hold fast to that faith in yourself and in your country and in our God, then the greatest moments of your journey are the ones that still lie ahead.

It's your world. Thank you, graduates. God bless you. Congratulations to the class of 2015. And good job, Lake Area Tech! We're proud of you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:36 p.m. in the Watertown Civic Arena. In his remarks, he referred to Linda Daugaard, wife of Gov. Dennis Daugaard of South Dakota; Lesli Jutting, superintendent of schools, Watertown School District; Secretary of Tourism James D. Hagen of South Dakota; Shane Ortmeier, director of support operations, Lake Area Technical Institute; Gov. William E. Haslam of Tennessee; and Mayor Rahm I. Emanuel of Chicago, IL.

Statement on the 70th Anniversary of V–E Day
May 8, 2015

Seventy years ago today, the Allied Forces declared victory in Europe over tyranny during World War II. After more than 5 years of brutal fighting that took the lives of some 40 million people across the continent—including 6 million Jews and millions of others murdered by the Nazi regime—the forces of freedom triumphed over oppression in Europe. The war was not yet won; it would be 3 more months of fighting in the Pacific. But V–E Day represented, at long last, a hope for peace.

Today we salute the more than 16 million Americans who left everything they knew—their families, their homes—to serve in World War II and then came home to help build the America we know today. We honor the memory of the more than 400,000 Americans who made the ultimate sacrifice so that we might live free. We rededicate ourselves—on this day and every day—to the freedoms for which they fought and to the American Dream for which they died. We stand with our allies, in Europe and around the world, in defending the liberty and human rights of all people. And we honor our brave men and women in uniform and their families who continue to defend the freedom that was won 70 years ago today.

Statement on the Parliamentary Elections in the United Kingdom
May 8, 2015

I congratulate Prime Minister Cameron on his impressive electoral victory. The special and essential relationship between the United States and the United Kingdom is rooted in deep and abiding shared interests and values. I have enjoyed working closely with Prime Minister Cameron on a range of shared interests these last several years, and I look forward to continuing to strengthen the bonds between our countries as we work together on behalf of global peace, security, and prosperity.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Central African Republic
May 8, 2015

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13667 of May 12, 2014, with respect to the Central African Republic is to continue in effect beyond May 12, 2015.

The situation in and in relation to the Central African Republic, which has been marked by a breakdown of law and order, intersectarian tension, widespread violence and atrocities, and the pervasive, often forced recruitment and use of child soldiers, threatens the peace, security, or stability of the Central African Republic and neighboring states, and continues to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. For this reason, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared in Executive Order

13667 with respect to the Central African Republic.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to John A. Boehner, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate. The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks on Global Entrepreneurship
May 11, 2015

The President. Thank you so much. Thank you. Good afternoon, everybody. Please have a seat. Welcome to the White House.

We have more than 20 countries represented here today. So to those of you visiting for the first time, welcome to the United States. We have a lot of brainpower here. We've got innovators and investors, business leaders, entrepreneurs. We've even got a few Sharks. [*Laughter*] Mark and Daymond and Barbara, they were having a chance to talk to some of these young entrepreneurs, and they—the young entrepreneurs, I think, decided they were pretty nice sharks, as sharks go. [*Laughter*]

I want to welcome Senator Coons, who's here and a great champion of our engagement with Africa. And I want to thank Secretary Penny Pritzker, as well as our Small Business Administrator, Maria Contreras-Sweet, and all the leaders from across the administration for their work to empower entrepreneurs like you.

We're here today because we believe in the power of entrepreneurship: the basic notion that if you've got an idea and if you really work hard and you're able to pick yourself up if you stumble a couple of times, you can eventually turn that idea into a reality. And this matters to us because encouraging the spirit of entrepreneurship can help us to tackle some of the greatest challenges that we face around the world.

At a time when we're still working to sustain the global economic recovery and put people back to work, helping folks to start new business can spur broad-based growth, here at home and around the world. At a time when the world is more interconnected than ever, we've got unprecedented opportunities to help more people access capital and resources and networks that they need to succeed. At a time that we're facing challenges that no country can meet by itself—lifting people out of poverty, combating climate change, preventing the spread of disease—helping social entrepreneurs mobilize and organize brings more people together to find solutions.

And entrepreneurship breaks down barriers between cultures and between faiths at a time when we need more than ever the capacity to understand and work across borders.

And no one understands this better than our young people, like those of you who are here today. I do have to say, as a quick aside, I feel kind of old hanging out with you. [*Laughter*] I used to think of entrepreneurs as kind of old, grizzled people, and now I'm the old grizzled person—[*laughter*]—and the entrepreneurs are all young, and so I have a extraordinarily good-looking group of entrepreneurs.

But more than half the world's population is under the age of 30. In some countries, it's an overwhelming majority. And yet there are also countries where youth unemployment can exceed 35 percent. And when so many young people don't see a future for themselves, if they don't see a path to success, it holds the entire nation back. It's a recipe for instability and conflict and violence.

And around the world, we've seen how violent extremists are exploiting and tapping into these frustrations of young people who feel that they've got no opportunity to improve their lives. And what they offer are dead ends. And yet if these young people don't feel that there is a positive path for themselves, then they're vulnerable.

Poverty alone does not cause terrorism or sectarian violence, but investments in youth entrepreneurship and education are some of our best antidotes that we have to that kind of

disorder. So all of this matters to us: to our shared prosperity and to our shared security.

And that's why, from the very beginning of my administration, I've elevated our support for entrepreneurship to make it easier for young people—and people generally—to start a new business or a new social venture. I hosted the first Global Entrepreneurship Summit back in 2010, and over the past 5 years, we've helped to train and empower thousands of aspiring entrepreneurs. We've helped small businesses expand into new markets, mobilized new investments, connected emerging innovators with mentors and networks and expanded access to capital.

As part of our Young African Leaders Initiative, we're offering training and grants and online resources and courses and leadership centers to help young entrepreneurs build businesses that can drive growth in Africa. As part of our initiative in Southeast Asia, we've connected young people across the ASEAN countries, and this is a region that will only grow in importance for the global economy.

Last month, I was in Jamaica—not only to visit Bob Marley's house, which was very cool. [*Laughter*] The—Mark, I'm telling you, if you can go, it's—[*laughter*]—it's cool. But also to launch our initiative for young entrepreneurs in the Caribbean and Latin America. And everywhere you go, I've—you meet these incredibly inspiring young people. Young Palestinians I met in Ramallah, working to improve the lives of people across the West Bank through business and creating opportunity. A young man in rural Malawi, his town currently in darkness, but he's building generators to deliver electricity. Young Malaysians, harnessing technology and connecting their communities to the global economy. And just like you, they're daring to dream and dedicating themselves to building something lasting for themselves, but also for their countries.

So all told, we've set a goal of generating $1 billion in new investment for emerging entrepreneurs worldwide by 2017. And half of that money is going to support young entrepreneurs and women entrepreneurs. And we're calling it the Spark Global Entrepreneurship Initiative—brings together some of the most successful entrepreneurship programs across our Government and makes sure that they're working with the private sector in ways that allow for long-term, sustained success.

So today we're taking some next steps. First, we're going to step up our efforts to support young entrepreneurs and women, which is just smart business. We want to spur entrepreneurship in places where it can do the most good and have the greatest impact. And we're going to work even harder to reach entrepreneurs who face the highest hurdles when it comes to accessing the essential tools of entrepreneurship: finance, support networks, mentors.

Second, I'm proud to announce that more of America's business leaders and innovators are joining us in this effort. We call them our ambassadors for global entrepreneurship. They do not have to be confirmed by the Senate—[*laughter*]—which is worth—[*laughter*]—cheering. Our first class of ambassadors has been doing extraordinary work. Steve Case, who, from the day I came into office, has been working with me on promoting entrepreneurship here in the United States and now overseas, he just ended his Rise of the Rest bus tour, investing in young entrepreneurs in 14 cities across the United States.

Today we're welcoming nine new ambassadors from companies working on shared challenges: how to build a business in underserved communities, how to improve the affordability and accessibility of medical care, how to inspire young girls to pursue science and engineering. And each of our ambassadors has committed to a signature project focused on the communities we're looking to help.

I'm just going to give you two examples, although each one of these entrepreneurs have amazing stories and are doing some extraordinary partnering with us. So Brian Chesky of Airbnb—where's Brian? There he is. In addition to stealing a few of my employees—[*laughter*]—is going to help the Cuban people navigate new business opportunities as their economy opens up to greater Internet connectivity and modern payment systems, which provides enormous opportunities for individu-

als inside of Cuba at a time when things are transitioning and changing.

Julie Hanna. Where is Julie? There she is. Julie will use her expertise leading Kiva to increase access to capital around the world. Her project commits to delivering a hundred million dollars in crowdfunded loans to 200,000 women and young entrepreneurs across 86 different countries.

So I want to thank all our global entrepreneurship ambassadors for stepping forward and being part of this important work. Why—can you guys all stand up? And our global ambassadors, I want to just give them a big round of applause because they're doing really important work.

And finally, I'm challenging our partners across the private sector around the world to join this effort. We've already got the backing of some of the world's leading entrepreneurial foundations and organizations. They've joined together to form the Spark Global Entrepreneurship Coalition, which will coordinate this work and help us mobilize even more funding to support entrepreneurs.

But today I'm also urging governments and companies and organizations and individuals to make their own commitments. Whether it's through training and mentorship programs or helping entrepreneurs access capital and connect to markets or improving educational opportunities and exchanges, everybody has a part to play. Everybody can do something.

And this summer, I'll travel to Kenya. While I'm there, I'll participate in the——

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]

The President. All right, yo! [*Laughter*] *Habari!* The—and so we're going to participate in the sixth Global Entrepreneurship Summit. And I'll have the opportunity to meet some of the brilliant young entrepreneurs from across Africa and around the world. If enough folks respond to the challenge that I'm issuing today, I believe that at the summit in Nairobi we'll be able to announce new investments and commitments that will pay off for years to come.

We want to empower people in ways that empower societies and ultimately empower the world. Women like Jimena Florez of Colombia—where's Jimena? There she is. So I just had a chance to meet with her. She started her own company making healthy foods—which Michelle would be very pleased with—[*laughter*]—and she started her company entirely with fellow women entrepreneurs, which Michelle would also be happy with. And through our support for women entrepreneurs, we've helped Jimena connect to mentors and training so that she can access new trade opportunities and grow her business. And through her work, she's also helping Colombian farmers adopt organic farming and benefit from access to new markets as well. So we want to thank you, Jimena, for helping to lift up your community. We're very, very proud of you.

We want to empower pioneers like Ziad Sankari. Where's Ziad? There he is, right next to her. When he was 17, he lost his father to a heart attack. And Ziad first came to the United States to study on a Fulbright. Then, through one of our science and technology competitions, he earned seed funding to develop his innovation, which is a heart-monitoring technology that clips to your waistband. So today, he's improving the way we respond to cardiac incidents, which will have enormous ramifications not just in places like Lebanon, but potentially, all around the world. So thank you, Ziad, for helping to save lives.

And we want to empower leaders of social change like Lina Khalifeh of Jordan. Where's Lina? There she is. After seeing one of her close friends abused, Lina said, that's enough. And so she had a background in martial arts. [*Laughter*] And so she opened SheFighter, a self-defense studio for women. So far, she has helped about 10,000 women learn how to protect themselves. And now she's competing for funding to expand her mission across the Middle East. So thank you, Lina. We want to be your partner to help women live—in helping women to live with dignity and safety.

So Jimena, Ziad, Lina—to all the young entrepreneurs out here—you are the face of change. You have the power to drive creative solutions to our pressing challenges. You know how to bring people together to work toward a common goal. And I believe in all of you. And

as I travel around the country—I was telling some of the entrepreneurs earlier—when you go to some of the toughest places in the world, where violence and deprivation are, sadly, daily facts of life, what people are most eager to hear about is opportunities to start a business. What they're most interested in hearing about is the power of entrepreneurship to allow them to shape their own destinies, not just to be subject to the whims of aid agencies or geopolitics, but to be part of something that allows them to pursue their dreams and, by doing so, empowers all of us.

I believe that entrepreneurs like you can make the world a better place, one idea at a time. And you're going to be how change happens: one person, one step, one business, one city, one country at a time.

There are brilliant young people and hard-working women and innovative thinkers from communities all around the world—people just like you—ready to make a difference. But they haven't been given the chance yet. And we can change that. And together, we can help make sure that anyone who's got the creativity and drive to work hard, no matter where they're from, what they look like, what their background is, they get a fair shot at pursuing their dreams. And we'll all be better for it.

That's what this is about. And that's why America is going to keep supporting entrepreneurs like you. And as long as I'm President, this is going to be a critical part of our engagement and our diplomacy with countries and peoples around the world, and I suspect I'll still be working on it well after I'm President as well.

So thank you very much, everybody. Proud of you. Keep it up. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:29 p.m. in the South Court Auditorium of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Mark Cuban, Daymond G. John, and Barbara A. Corcoran, castmembers, ABC's "Shark Tank" program; Stephen M. Case, chief executive officer, Revolution; Brian J. Chesky, chief executive officer, Airbnb, Inc.; Julie Hanna, executive chair of the board of directors, Kiva; Jimena Florez, founder, Crispy Fruits; and Ziad Sankari, founder, CardioDiagnostics.

Remarks During a Panel Discussion at the Catholic-Evangelical Leadership Summit on Overcoming Poverty at Georgetown University
May 12, 2015

Washington Post columnist E.J. Dionne, Jr. It's a real honor to be here today with my two presidents: President Obama and President DeGioia. [*Laughter*] And my friend David Brooks hurled the most vicious insult at me ever once when he said that I was the only person he ever met whose eyes lit up at the words "panel discussion." [*Laughter*] And I have to confess that my eyes did light up when I was asked to do this particular panel discussion, and not just for the obvious reason to my left—and again, it's a real honor to be with you, Mr. President—or Arthur or Bob.

Poverty is a subject we talk about mainly when tragic events, such as those we witnessed recently in Baltimore, grab our attention. Then, we push it aside, we bury it, we say it's not politically shrewd to talk about it. So I salute Georgetown, my friend John Carr, and Galen Carey, and all the other extraordinary people who are gathered here for the poverty summit from all religious traditions all over the country.

Our friend Jim Wallis once said that if you cut everything Jesus said about the poor out of the Gospel, you have a book full of holes. And these are evangelicals, Catholics, and others who understand what the Scripture said.

Just two quick organizing points on our discussion. The first is that when it's time to go, please keep your seat so the President can be escorted out. The other is that Bob and Arthur and I all agreed that we should direct somewhat more attention to President Obama than

to the other members of the panel. [*Laughter*] I just say that—I say that in advance so that you know this was our call and not some exercise in executive power. [*Laughter*] This was our decision to do this.

And in any event, we hope this will be a back-and-forth kind of discussion. Bob and Arthur, feel free to interrupt the President if it—if you feel like it. [*Laughter*]

My first question, Mr. President, is the obvious one. A friend of mine said yesterday, when do Presidents do panels? And what came to mind is the late Admiral Stockdale: "Who am I? Why am I here?" [*Laughter*] And I'd like to ask you why you decided—this is a very unusual venue for a President to put himself in—and I'd like to ask you, where do you hope this discussion will lead beyond today?

And I was struck with something you said in your speech last week. You said, "Politicians talk about poverty and inequality and then gut policies that help alleviate poverty and reverse inequality." Why are you doing this, and how do you want us to come out of here?

The President. Well, first of all, I want to thank President DeGioia, the Georgetown community, all the groups—nonprofits, faith-based groups, and others—who are hosting this today. And I want to thank this terrific panel.

I think that we are at a moment—in part because of what's happened in Baltimore and Ferguson and other places, but in part because a growing awareness of inequality in our society—where it may be possible not only to refocus attention on the issue of poverty, but also maybe to bridge some of the gaps that have existed and the ideological divides that have prevented us from making progress.

And there are a lot of folks here who I have worked with; they disagree with me on some issues, but they have great sincerity when it comes to wanting to deal with helping the least of these. And so this is a wonderful occasion for us to join together.

Part of the reason I thought this venue would be useful and I wanted to have a dialogue with Bob and Arthur is that we have been stuck, I think, for a long time in a debate that creates a couple of straw men. Right? The stereotype is that you've got folks on the left who just want to pour more money into social programs and don't care anything about culture or parenting or family structures. And that's one stereotype. And then, you've got cold-hearted, free market, capitalist types who are reading Ayn Rand and—[*laughter*]—think everybody is moochers, and that's—and I think the truth is more complicated.

I think that there are those on the conservative spectrum who deeply care about the least of these, deeply care about the poor, exhibit that through their churches, through community groups, through philanthropic efforts, but are suspicious of what government can do. And then, there are those on the left who, I think, are in the trenches every day and see how important parenting is and how important family structures are and the connective tissue that holds communities together and recognize that that contributes to poverty when those structures fray, but also believe that government and resources can make a difference in creating an environment in which young people can succeed despite great odds. And it seems to me that if coming out of this conversation we can have a both-and conversation rather than either-or conversation, then we'll be making some progress.

And the last point, I guess, I want to make is I also want to emphasize, we can do something about these issues. I think it is a mistake for us to suggest that somehow every effort we make has failed and we are powerless to address poverty. That's just not true. First of all, just in absolute terms, the poverty rate, when you take into account tax-and-transfer programs, has been reduced about 40 percent since 1967.

Now, that does not lessen our concern about communities where poverty remains chronic. It does suggest, though, that we have been able to lessen poverty when we decide we want to do something about it. In every low-income community around the country, there are programs that work to provide ladders of opportunity to young people; we just haven't figured out how to scale them up.

And so one of the things I'm always concerned about is cynicism. I, my Chief of Staff, Denis McDonough, we take walks around the South Lawn, usually when the weather is good, and a lot of it is policy talk; sometimes, it's just talk about values. And one of our favorite sayings is, our job is to guard against cynicism, particularly in this town. And I think it's important when it comes to dealing with issues of poverty for us to guard against cynicism and not buy the idea that the poor will always be with us and there's nothing we can do. Because there's a lot we can do. The question is, do we have the political will, the communal will to do something about it?

Mr. Dionne. Thank you, Mr. President. I feel, as a journalist, maybe I'm the one representative of cynicism up here—[*laughter*]—so I'll try to do my job. I want to go through the panel and come back to you, Mr. President. I want to invite Bob, and I'm going to encourage us to reach for solutions. But before we get there, I think it's important to say that your book, Bob, your book "Our Kids" is above all a moral call on the country to think about all the kids in the country who have been left out as our kids in some deep way. And you make the point that the better off and the poor are now so far apart that the fortunate don't even see the lives of the unlucky and the left behind. You wrote, "Before I began this research, I was like that."

And following on what the President said, you insist that the decline in social mobility, the blocking of the American Dream for so many, is a purple problem. And I may have some questions later on that, but I really would like you to lay out the red and blue components. And also, how do we break through a politics in which food stamp recipients are still somehow cast as privileged or the poor are demonized. But I'd like you to lay out sort of the moral call of your book.

Harvard University Malkin Professor of Public Policy Robert D. Putnam. Thanks. Thanks, E.J., and thanks to the President and to Arthur for joining me in this conversation.

I think in this domain, there's good news and bad news, and it's important to begin with the bad news because we have to understand where we are. The President is absolutely right that the War on Poverty did make a real difference, but it made a difference more for poverty among people of my age than it did for poverty among kids.

And with respect to kids, I completely agree with the President that we know about some things that would work and things that would make a real difference in the lives of poor kids, but what the book that you've deferred to, "Our Kids," what it presents is a lot of evidence of growing gaps between rich kids and poor kids; that over the last 30 or 40 years, things have gotten better and better for kids coming from well-off homes and worse and worse for kids coming from less well-off homes.

And I don't mean Bill Gates and some homeless person. I mean people coming from college-educated homes, their kids are doing better and better, and people coming from high school-educated homes, their kids aren't. And it's not just that there's this class gap, but a class gap on our watch. I don't mean just the President's watch, but I mean on my generation's watch, that gap has grown.

And you can see it in measures of family stability. You can see it in measures of the investments that parents are able to make in their kids, the investments of money and the investments of time. You can see it in the quality of schools kids go to. You can see it in the character of the social and community support that kids—rich kids and poor kids—are getting from their communities. Church attendance is a good example of that, actually. Churches are an important source of social support for kids outside their own family, but church attendance is down much more rapidly among kids coming from impoverished backgrounds than among kids coming from wealthy backgrounds.

And so I think what all of that evidence suggests is that we do face, I think, actually a serious crisis in which, increasingly, the most important decision that anybody makes is choosing their parents. [*Laughter*] And if you—if, like my grandchildren are really smart, they were—the best decision they ever made was to choose college-educated parents and great

grandparents. [*Laughter*] But out there, someplace else, there is another bunch of kids who are just as talented and just as—in principle—just as hard-working, but who happened to choose parents who weren't very well educated and/or weren't high-income, and those kids' fate is being determined by things that they had no control over. And that's fundamentally unfair.

It also is, by the way, bad for our economy, because when we have this large number of kids growing up in poverty, it's not like that's going to make things better for my grandchildren. It's going to make things worse for my grandchildren. So this is, in principle, a solution that we—a problem that we ought to find solutions to.

And historically, this is a kind of problem that Americans have faced before and have solved, and this is the basis for my optimism. There have been previous periods in American history when we've had a great gap between rich and poor, when we have ignored the least of these, in which we've—I'm thinking of the Gilded Age at the end of the 19th century, and both of you have written about that period—in which there was a great gap between rich and poor and kids were—we were ignoring lots of kids, especially lots of immigrant kids. And America seemed to be going to hell in a hand basket. And there was a dominant philosophy, social Darwinism, which said that it's better for everybody if everybody is selfish and the devil take the hindmost.

But that—not unlike some of the ideology of Ayn Rand that you referred to—but that period was quickly—not quickly, but was overcome by a reawakening of the conscience of America across party lines, with the important contribution of religious leaders and religious people, to the fact that these are all our kids.

And now is not the time to rehearse all of the lessons of that earlier period, but I think it does actually give me grounds for hope. This is a kind of problem that we could solve as long as we all recognize that it's in everybody's interest to raise up these poor kids and not to leave them in the dust.

Mr. Dionne. Thank you very much. By the way, let the record show the President was not looking at Arthur when he referred to cold-hearted capitalists. [*Laughter*] But it is nice to have somebody here from the AEI.

American Enterprise Institute President Arthur C. Brooks. Well, E.J., I mean, when the President said that, I was just thinking—what was going through my head was, please don't look at me, please don't look at me. [*Laughter*] But you notice, when Bob said this—about the social Darwinism—he pointed at me. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Putnam. No.

Mr. Brooks. So I'm more outnumbered than my Thanksgiving table in Seattle, I'll tell you. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Dionne. You just have to look into your heart, Arthur. [*Laughter*] And in fact, that's kind of what I want to ask you to do here. I mean, your views on these subjects have actually changed, and I think it's one of the reasons you wanted to join us today.

Back in 2010, you talked about makers and takers in society and a culture of redistribution. But in February 2014, you wrote a very important article in Commentary, "Be Open-Hearted"—"Open-Handed Toward Your Brothers." And you have said we have to declare peace on the safety net, which I think is a really important thing to say.

And so—and as the President suggested, the safety net we have has actually cut poverty substantially. So twin questions: Could you talk about how and why your own views have changed, if I fairly characterize that? And in the spirit we're celebrating here of transideological nonpartisanship—now, there's a mouthful for you—[*laughter*].

Mr. Brooks. Yes. Wow.

Mr. Dionne. In that spirit, where can Republicans cooperate with Democrats, conservatives with liberals, on safety net issues like making the earned-income tax credit permanent or expanding the child tax credit? I mean, where can we find not just verbal common ground, but actual common ground to get things done for the least among us?

Mr. Brooks. Well thank you, E.J. And thank you, Mr. President. It's an honor to be here

and with all of you. This is such an important exercise in bringing Catholics and evangelicals together, but having a public discussion.

One of the main things that I do as president of AEI is to talk publicly about issues and start a conversation with my colleagues in a way that I hope can stimulate the conversation and spread it around the country.

When—at the American Enterprise Institute, where we have a longstanding history of work on the nature of American capitalism, when we're focusing very deeply on poverty, it sends a signal to a lot of people that are deeply involved in the free enterprise movement. My colleague, Robert Doar, is here. He came to AEI because poverty is the most important thing to him. And indeed, the reason I came into the free enterprise movement many years ago is because poverty is the thing I care about the most.

And, in point of fact, 2 billion people around the world have been lifted up out of poverty because of ideas revolving around free enterprise and free trade and the globalization of ideas of sharing through property rights and rule of law and all the things that the President is talking about in policy debates right now.

That's why I'm in this particular movement. But we've gotten into a partisan moment where we substitute a moral consensus about how we serve the least of these, our brothers and sisters, where we pretend that that moral consensus is impossible, and we blow up policy differences until they become a holy war. That's got to stop because it's completely unnecessary. Now, you brought—[*applause*]—and we can stop that, absolutely, with a couple of key principles.

So how are we on the center right talking about poverty in the most effective way? Number one is with a conceptual matter. We have a grave tendency on both the left and the right to talk about poor people as "the other." Remember in Matthew 25, these are our brothers and sisters. Jim Olson and I have this roadshow; we go to campuses and everybody wants to set up something, right-left debates, and it never works out, because it turns out, we both have a commitment to the teachings of the Savior when it comes to treating the least of these, our brothers and sisters.

When you talk about people as your brothers and sisters you don't talk about them as liabilities to manage. They're not liabilities to manage. They're assets to develop because every one of us made in God's image is an asset to develop. That's a completely different approach to poverty alleviation. That's a human capital approach to poverty alleviation. That's what we can do to stimulate that conversation on the political right, just as it can be on the political left.

One concept that rides along with that is to point out—and this is what I do to many of my friends on Capitol Hill—I remind them that just because people are on public assistance doesn't mean they want to be on public assistance. And that's the difference between people who factually are making a living and who are accepting public assistance. That's a—it's an important matter to remember about the motivations of people and humanizing them. And then the question is, how can we come together? How can we come together?

I have, indeed, written that it's time to declare peace on the safety net. And I say that as a political conservative. Why? Because Ronald Reagan said that; because Friedrich Hayek said that. This is not a radical position. In fact, the social safety net is one of the greatest achievements of free enterprise: that we could have the wealth and largesse as a society, that we take—that we can help take care of people who are poor that we've never even met. It's ahistoric; it's never happened before. We should be proud of that.

But then, when I talk to conservative policymakers and say how should you distinguish yourself from the traditional positions in a marketplace of ideas from progressives, you should also talk about the fact that the safety net should be limited to people who are truly indigent, as opposed to being spread around in a way that metastasizes into middle class entitlements and imperils our economy.

And the third part is that help should always come with the dignifying power of work to the extent that we can. Then, we can have, with

these three ideas—declaring peace on the safety net, safety net only for the indigent, and always with work—then we can have an interesting moral consensus and policy competition of ideas and maybe make some progress.

Mr. Dionne. Thank you. In fact, I'm hoping people will challenge each other about what that actually means in terms of policy. And I want to invite the President to do that.

I'm tempted, Mr. President, to ask you to sort of go in a couple of directions at once. One is, I am, again, hoping that you can enlist Arthur as your lobbyist on this. One kind of question I want to ask is, if John Boehner and Mitch McConnell were watching this and suddenly had a conversion—and there are a lot of religious people in the audience, so miracles——

The President. I assure you they're not watching this. [*Laughter*] But it's a hypothetical, so we can—[*laughter*].

Mr. Dionne. Well, it's a religious audience. They believe in miracles. [*Laughter*] So if they said, "We are so persuaded that it's time we do something about the poor, Mr. President, tell us a few things that we'll actually pass, we'll do this." When you think about—we can talk kind of abstractly about the family on this side, and what government can do. What do you think would actually make a difference? So that's one kind of question I'm tempted to ask.

And maybe you could put that into the context of Bob's mention of the Gilded Age. Because, as you know, I was much taken by that Osawatomie speech—I even learned how to pronounce Osawatomie, thanks to you—back in 20—help me. [*Laughter*]

The President. It's a couple years ago.

Mr. Dionne. Anyway. A couple years ago, 2011. And it really did put this conversation in context. Where we do seem in certain ways to be having the problems we had back then. So what would you tell Congress, "Please help me on this"? And how do we sort of move out of this Gilded Age–feeling kind of period?

The President. Well, let me tease out a couple things that both Bob and Arthur said. And maybe some of these will be challenging to a couple of them, and they may want to respond. But let me talk about big picture, and then we can talk about specifics.

First of all, I think we can all stipulate that the best antipoverty program is a job, which confers not just income, but structure and dignity and a sense of connection to community. Which means we have to spend time thinking about the macroeconomy, the broader economy as a whole.

Now, what has happened is, is that since, let's say, 1973, over the last 40 years, the share of income going to the bottom 90 percent has shrunk from about 65 percent down to about 53 percent. It's a big shift. It's a big transfer. And so we can't have a conversation about poverty without talking about what's happened to the middle class and the ladders of opportunity into the middle class.

And when I read Bob's book, the first thing that strikes you is, when he's growing up in Ohio, he's in a community where the banker is living in reasonable proximity to the janitor at the school. The janitor's daughter may be going out with the banker's son. There are a set of common institutions—they may attend the same church, they may be member of the same Rotary Club, they may be active at the same parks—and all the things that stitch them together. And that is all contributing to social mobility and to a sense of possibility and opportunity for all kids in that community.

Mr. Putnam. Exactly.

The President. All right? Now, part of what's happened is that—and this is where Arthur and I would probably have some disagreements. We don't dispute that the free market is the greatest producer of wealth in history; it has lifted billions of people out of poverty. We believe in property rights, rule of law, so forth. But there has always been trends in the market in which concentrations of wealth can lead to some being left behind. And what's happened in our economy is that those who are doing better and better—more skilled, more educated, luckier, having greater advantages—are withdrawing from sort of the commons. Kids start going to private schools. Kids start working out at private clubs instead of the public parks. An antigovernment ideology then

disinvests from those common goods and those things that draw us together. And that, in part, contributes to the fact that there's less opportunity for our kids, all of our kids.

Now, that's not inevitable. A free market is perfectly compatible with also us making investment in good public schools, public universities, investments in public parks, investments in a whole bunch—public infrastructure that grows our economy and spreads it around. But that's, in part, what's been under attack for the last 30 years. And so in some ways, rather than soften the edges of the market, we've turbocharged it. And we have not been willing, I think, to make some of those common investments so that everybody can play a part in getting opportunity.

Now, one other thing I've got to say about this is that even back in Bob's day, that was also happening. It's just, it was happening to Black people.

Mr. Putnam. Right. That's right.

The President. And so in some ways, part of what's changed is that those biases or those restrictions on who had access to resources that allowed them to climb out of poverty—who had access to the firefighter's job, who had access to the assembly line job, the blue-collar job that paid well enough to be in the middle class and then got you to the suburbs, and then the next generation was suddenly office workers—all those things were foreclosed to a big chunk of the minority population in this country for decades.

And that accumulated and built up. And over time, people with less and less resources, more and more strains—because it's hard being poor. People don't like being poor. And it's time-consuming, it's stressful. It's hard. And so over time, families frayed. Men who could not get jobs left. Mothers who are single are not able to read as much to their kids. So all that was happening 40 years ago to African Americans. And now what we're seeing is that those same trends have accelerated, and they're spreading to the broader community.

But the pattern that, Bob, you're recording in some of your stories is no different when—than what William Julius Wilson was talking about when he talked about the truly disadvantaged. So I say all this—and I know that was not an answer to your question. [*Laughter*] I will be willing to answer it, but I think it is important for us at the outset to acknowledge, if in fact we are going to find common ground, then we also have to acknowledge that there are certain investments we are willing to make as a society, as a whole: in public schools and public universities; in, today, I believe early childhood education; in making sure that economic opportunity is available in communities that are isolated; and that somebody can get a job; and that there's actually a train that takes folks to where the jobs are; that broadband lines are in rural communities and not just in cities. And those things are not going to happen through market forces alone.

And if that's the case, then our government and our budgets have to reflect our willingness to make those investments. If we don't make those investments, then we could agree on the earned-income tax credit, which I know Arthur believes in. We could agree on home visitation for low-income parents. All those things will make a difference, but the broader trends in our society will make it harder and harder for us to deal with both inequality and poverty.

And so I think it's important for us to recognize there is a genuine debate here, and that is, what portion of our collective wealth and budget are we willing to invest in those things that allow a poor kid, whether in a rural town or in Appalachia or in the inner city, to access what they need both in terms of mentors and social networks, as well as decent books and computers and so forth, in order for them to succeed along the terms that Arthur discussed?

And right now they don't have those things, and those things have been stripped away. You look at State budgets, you look at city budgets, and you look at Federal budgets, and we don't make those same common investments that we used to. And it's had an impact. And we shouldn't pretend that somehow we have been making those same investments. We haven't been. And there's been a very specific ideological push not to make those investments. That's where the argument comes in.

Mr. Dionne. And if I could follow up, which gets to the underlying problem where we talk, piously sometimes, about let's tear down these ideological red-blue barriers, yet when push comes to shove, these things get rejected. How do you change the politics of that? I mean that—as you said, Mitch McConnell and John Boehner were unlikely to be watching us; that actually has a kind of political significance. Not to this event, but in general.

The President. I was suggesting, they're busy right now. They've got votes and—[*laughter*].

Mr. Dionne. No, but I think you were saying something else. How do you tear down those barriers? Because you laid out a fairly robust agenda there. And then, I want to—forgive me, Arthur and Bob—but I'm curious, how do you get from here to there?

The President. Well, part of what happened in our politics and part of what shifted from when Bob was young and he was seeing a genuine community—there were still class divisions in your small town.

Mr. Putnam. True. True.

The President. There were probably certain clubs or certain activities that were still restricted to the banker's son as opposed to the janitor's son. But it was more integrated. Part of what's happened is, is that elites in a very mobile, globalized world are able to live together, away from folks who are not as wealthy, and so they're—they feel less of a commitment to making those investments.

In that sense—and what used to be racial segregation now mirrors itself in class segregation and this great sorting that's taking place. Now, that creates its own politics. Right? I mean, there's some communities where I'm not—I don't know—not only do I not know poor people, I don't even know people who have trouble paying the bills at the end of the month. I just don't know those people. And so there's a less sense of investment in those children. So that's part of what's happened.

But part of it has also been—there's always been a strain in American politics where you've got the middle class, and the question has been, who are you mad at, if you're struggling; if you're working, but you don't seem to be getting ahead. And over the last 40 years, sadly, I think there's been an effort to either make folks mad at folks at the top or to make mad—be mad at folks at the bottom. And I think the effort to suggest that the poor are sponges, leaches, are—don't want to work, are lazy, are undeserving, got traction.

And look, it's still being propagated. I mean, I have to say that if you watch Fox News on a regular basis, it is a constant menu—they will find, like, folks who make me mad. I don't know where they find them, right? [*Laughter*] They're all, like, "I don't want to work, I just want a free Obama phone"—[*laughter*]—or whatever. And that becomes an entire narrative, right? That gets worked up. And very rarely do you hear an interview of a waitress—which is much more typical—who's raising a couple of kids and is doing everything right, but still can't pay the bills.

And so if we're going to change how John Boehner and Mitch McConnell think, we're going to have to change how our body politic thinks, which means we're going to have to change how the media reports on these issues and how people's impressions of what it's like to struggle in this economy looks like and how budgets connect to that. And that's a—it's a hard process because that requires a much broader conversation than typically we have on the nightly news.

Mr. Dionne. I am tempted to welcome Arthur to defend his network. But instead, I want to sort of maybe invite him to an altar call here. [*Laughter*] I want to invite you to a kind of altar call, which is, the President talked about some basic public investments that are actually pretty old-fashioned public investments, along the lines of somebody like President Eisenhower supported a lot of those kinds of investments——

The President. The first Republican President, Abraham Lincoln, thought things like land-grant colleges and infrastructure, investments in basic research in science were important.

I suspect, Arthur, you'd agree in theory about those investments. And then, the question would be——

Mr. Brooks. How much?

The President. ——how much?

Mr. Brooks. How much? Sure. Look, no good economist, no self-respecting person who understands anything about economics denies that there are public goods. There just are public goods. We need public goods. Markets fail sometimes; there's a role for the state. There are no radical libertarians up here, there—libertarians who believe that the state should not exist, for example. Even the libertarians don't think that. So we shouldn't caricature the views of others because, in point of fact, that's—that impugns the motives.

I think that what we're talking about is, one, when are there public goods? When can the government provide them? And when are the benefits higher than the costs of the government providing these things? Because, in point of fact, when we don't make cost-benefit calculations at least at the macro level about public goods, the poor pay. This is a fact.

If you look at what's happening in the periphery countries of Europe today, this is a—as George W. Bush used to say, this is a true fact. [*Laughter*] They—it's more emphasis. There's nothing wrong. [*Laughter*] The—if you don't pay attention to the macro economy and the fiscal stability, you will become insolvent. And if you become insolvent, you will have austerity. And if you have austerity, the poor always pay. Jim Wallis taught me this. The poor always pay when there's austerity. The rich never pay. The rich never are left with the bill. It's the poor who are left with the bill.

So if you join me in believing the safety net is a fundamental, moral right, and it's a privilege of our society to provide, you must avoid austerity and you must avoid insolvency. And the only way that you can do that is with smart policies.

And I'm a hundred-percent sure that the President agrees with me about smart macroeconomic public policies, so I'm not caricaturing these views either. Although, can you believe he said "Obama phone"? [*Laughter*] And he's against the Obama phone. So let's stipulate to that. [*Laughter*] Just only because they took away his phone. [*Laughter*]

Now, since we believe that there should be public goods, then we're really talking about the system that provides them and provides them efficiently. The President talked about the changing structure of the income distribution, and it's unambiguously true. What I would urge us to regret is this notion that it's not a shift, but a transfer. Okay, now, it's not a transfer.

Since the 1970s, it's not that the rich have gotten richer because the poor have gotten poorer. The poor are not having their money taken away and given to the rich. The rich have gotten richer faster than the poor have moved up. And we might be concerned with that because that also reflects on opportunity. And as an opportunity society, as an equal opportunity society, we should all be really concerned with that.

But to the extent that we can get away from this notion that the rich are stealing from the poor, then we can look at this in, I think, in a way that's constructive. Why? Because the rich are our neighbors and the poor are our neighbors, and everybody else should be our neighbors, and they're all our kids. And I think getting away from that rhetoric is really important.

And then, the last point, is actually—as we come to consensus is remembering that capitalism or socialism or social democracy or any system is just a system. Look, it's just a system. It's not—it's just a machine. It's like your car. You can do great good with it, you can do great evil with it. It can't go uninhibited. So far, it can't drive on its own. It will soon enough. The economy never will be able to.

Capitalism is nothing more than a system, and it must be predicated on right morals. It must be. Adam Smith taught me that. Adam Smith, the father of modern economics; he wrote "The Wealth of Nations" in 1776. Seventeen years before, he wrote "The Theory of Moral Sentiments," which was a more important book because it talked about what it meant as a society to earn the right to have free enterprise, to have free economics. And it was true then, and it's still true today.

So this is why this conference is so important. And this conversation with the President

of the United States is so important, from my point of view—I say with appropriate humility—is because we're talking about right morality toward our brothers and sisters, and built on that, that's when we can have an open discussion to get our capitalism right. And then, the distribution of resources is only a tertiary question.

Mr. Dionne. I still want to know how much infrastructure you're actually willing to vote for, but I'll take it. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Brooks. Forty-one billion dollars.

Mr. Dionne. All right, it's a start. We can negotiate.

I want to—this is in a way for both the President and Bob, because in this conversation about poverty, there's a kind of consensus on this stage that, yes, you need to care about family structure, it really matters, but if you don't worry about the economy, you're not sort of thinking about why the battering ram is against the family.

And yet this family conversation can make a lot of people feel uneasy because it sounds like either you're not taking politics seriously or you're not taking the real economic pressure seriously. And I just want to share two things with the President and Bob and have you respond.

One, as you can imagine, I asked a lot of smart people what they would ask about if they were in my position. And one very smart economist said, look, what we know is, when we have really tight labor markets, unemployment down below—down to 4 or even lower, Kennedy-Johnson years, World War II, at the end of the Clinton years—all kinds of good things start happening to poor people. So maybe, this person said, even though, he says, yes, family structure matters, let's stop with the moral lectures and just run a really tight economic policy, and we could have some really good things happen to us.

And then, the other thing I wanted to share—and I'm being pointed here, Mr. President, because you know, and you've—I've heard you talk about this, but not that often publicly, which is—you know, I've heard you in those sessions you do with opinion reporters. Ta-Nehisi Coates wrote something back in 2013 about your talk about what needs to happen inside the African American community—and I know you remember this: "Taking full measure of the Obama Presidency thus far, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that this White House has one way of addressing the social ills that afflict Black people and particularly Black youth and another way of addressing everyone else. I would have a hard time imagining the President telling the women of Barnard that"—quotes—"'there's no longer room for any excuses'—as though they were in the business of making them."

I'd love you to address sort of the particular question about, maybe it is primarily about economics because we can't do much about the other things through government policy; and also answer Ta-Nehisi's critique, because I know you hear that a lot.

The President. Why don't we let Bob——

Mr. Dionne. Let Bob——

Mr. Putnam. Well, I'm going to try to respond to that, and of course, I want to hear what the President has to say about that. But I wanted to just comment briefly on that earlier conversation, about—first of all, about public goods.

I agree very much with the President's framing of this issue, that is, that we disinvested in collective assets, collective goods that would benefit everybody, but are more important for poor people because they can't do it on their own. I want to just give one example of that that's very vivid, and this is a case where we've clearly shot ourselves in the foot.

For most of the 20th century, all Americans of all walks of life thought that part of an—getting a good education was getting soft skills: not just reading, writing, arithmetic, but cooperation and teamwork and so on. And part of that was that everybody in the country got free access to extracurricular activities——

The President. Sports, music.

Mr. Putnam. Band and football and music and so on. But beginning about 20 years ago, the view developed—which is really, really deeply evil—that that's just a frill.

And so we disinvested, and we said if you want to have—if you want to take part in football here or you want to take part in music, you've got to pay for it. And of course, what that means is that poor people can't pay for it. It's a big deal—$1,600 on average for two kids in a family. Well, $1,600 to play football or play in the band or French club or whatever, it's not a big deal if your income is $200,000; but if you income is $16,000, who in their right mind is going to be paying 10 percent of their family income?

So it seems to me that that's a case where the allocation that the benefits of learning teamwork and hard skills and so—I mean, hard, you know, grit—were only on the individual. But that wasn't true. The whole country was benefiting from the fact that we had a very broad based set of skills that people had. So I'm trying to emphasize this—how deep runs this antipathy in some quarters for the notion that these are all our kids and, therefore, we've got to invest in all of them.

But I also want to then come back, if I can, to, I think, the thing we maybe haven't spent enough time here, and that is, this is a purple problem. There are those of us who on the left can see most clearly the economic sources of this problem and want to do something about it. But then, there are people on the conservative side, especially religious people, who can—who use a different lens, and they can see most clearly the effects of family disruption among poor families of all races on the prospects of kids.

And in the stories of the kids that we gathered across America—I want to return a little bit not just to the abstract discussion of poverty, but to real kids. Mary Sue in Port Clinton—doesn't have anything the—like the same opportunities as my granddaughter. But part of that is because Mary Sue's parents behaved in very irresponsible ways. We interviewed a kid from—a young woman from Duluth who is now on drugs. How did she get on drugs? Because her dad was addicted to meth and wanted to get high, but didn't want to get high alone, so her dad taught—Molly is her name—how to smoke, how to do meth. I don't even know how you do meth myself. I'll have to check with him. [*Laughter*]

And it's systematically—the fact is we all know this, that it's—I'm not making an attack on single moms, who are often doing terrific jobs in the face of lots of obstacles, but I am saying it's harder to do that. And therefore, we need to think, all of us, including those of us—and I know the President agrees with me about this—even those of us on the more progressive side have to think, how did we get into a state in which two-thirds of American kids coming from what we used to call the working class have only a single parent, and what can we do to fix that?

I'm not sure this is government's role. But I do think that if we're concerned about poverty, we also, all of us, have to think about this purple side of the problem—I mean, this family side of the problem. And we shouldn't—those of us—I'm now speaking to my side of the choir—we shouldn't just assume that anybody who talks about family stability is somehow saying that the economics don't matter. Of course, the economics matter. It's both-and, it's not either-or.

Mr. Dionne. Mr. President?

The President. Well, a couple of things I would say. First of all, just going back to something Arthur said earlier about how we characterize the wealthy, and did they take this extra wealth from the poor, the middle class: These are broad economic trends turbocharged by technology and globalization, a winner-take-all economy that allows those with even slightly better skills to massively expand their reach and their markets, and they make more money, and it gets more concentrated, and that then reinforces itself. But there are values and decisions that have aided and abetted that process.

So, for example, in the era that Bob was talking about, if you had a company in that town, that company had a whole bunch of social restraints on it because the CEO felt it was a member of that community and the sense of obligation about paying a certain wage or contributing to the local high school or what have you was real. And today, the average Fortune 500 company—some are great corporate

citizens, some are great employers—but they don't have to be, and that's certainly not how they're judged.

And that may account for the fact that where a previous CEO of a company might have made 50 times the average wage of the worker, they might now make a thousand times or 2,000 times. And that's now accepted practice inside the corporate boardroom. Now, that's not because they're bad people. It's just that they have been freed from a certain set of social constraints.

And those values have changed. And sometimes, tax policy has encouraged that, and government policy has encouraged that. And there's a whole literature that justifies that as, well, that's what you'd need to get the best CEO and they're bringing the most value, and then you do tip into a little bit of Ayn Rand. [*Laughter*]

Which, Arthur, I think you'd be the first to acknowledge, because I'm in dinners with some of your buddies, and I have conversations with them. [*Laughter*] And if they're not on a panel, they'll say, you know what, we created all this stuff, and we made it, and we're creating value, and we should be able to make decisions about where it goes.

So there's less commitment to those public goods, even though a good economist who's read Adam Smith's "Moral Sentiments" would acknowledge that actually, we're underinvesting, or at least, we have to have a certain investment. So that's point number one.

Point number two, on this whole family-character-values-structure issue: It's true that if I'm in—if I'm giving a commencement at Morehouse that I will have a conversation with young Black men about taking responsibility as fathers that I probably will not have with the women of Barnard. And I make no apologies for that. And the reason is, is because I am a Black man who grew up without a father, and I know the cost that I paid for that. And I also know that I had the capacity to break that cycle, and as a consequence, I think my daughters are better off.

And that is not something that—for me to have that conversation does not negate my conversation about the need for early childhood education or the need for job training or the need for greater investment in infrastructure or jobs in low-income communities.

So look, I'll talk till you're blue in the face about hard-nosed, economic, macroeconomic policies, but in the meantime, I've got a bunch of kids right now who are graduating, and I want to give them some sense that they can have an impact on their immediate circumstances and the joys of fatherhood.

And we did something with "My Brother's Keepers," which emphasizes apprenticeships and emphasizes corporate responsibility, and we're gathering resources to give very concrete hooks for kids to be able to advance. And I'm going very hard at issues of criminal justice reform and breaking this school-to-prison pipeline that exists for so many young African American men. But when I'm sitting there talking to these kids, and I've got a boy who says, "You know what, how did you get over being mad at your dad, because I've got a father who beat my mom and now has left and has left the State, and I've never seen him because he's trying to avoid $83,000 in child support payments, and I want to love my dad, but I don't know how to do that," I'm not going to have a conversation with him about macroeconomics. [*Laughter*]

I'm going to have a conversation with him about how I tried to understand what it is that my father had gone through and how issues that were very specific to him created his difficulties in his relationships and his children so that I might be able to forgive him and that I might then be able to come to terms with that.

And I don't apologize for that conversation. I think—and so this is what I mean when—or this is where I agreed very much with Bob that this is not an either-or conversation, it is a both-and. The reason we get trapped in the either-or conversation is because all too often, not Arthur, but those who have argued against a safety net or argued against government programs, have used the rationale that character matters, family matters, values matter as a rationale for the disinvestment in public goods that took place over the course of 20 to 30 years.

If in fact the most important thing is character and parents, then it's okay if we don't have band and music at school. That's the argument that you will hear. It's okay—look, there are immigrant kids who are learning in schools that are much worse, and we're spending huge amounts in the district, and we still get poor outcomes, and so obviously, money is not the issue. And so what you hear is a logic that is used as an excuse to underinvest in those public goods.

And that's why I think a lot of people are resistant to it and are skeptical of that conversation. And I guess what I'm saying is that, guarding against cynicism, what we should say is, we are going to argue hard for those public investments. We're going to argue hard for early childhood education because, by the way, if a young kid—3, 4 years old—is hearing a lot of words, the science tells us that they're going to be more likely to succeed at school. And if they've got trained and decently paid teachers in that preschool, then they're actually going to get—by the time they're in third grade, they'll be reading at grade level.

And those all very concrete policies. But it requires some money. We're going to argue hard for that stuff. And lo and behold, if we do those things, the values and the character that those kids are learning in a loving environment, where they can succeed in school and they're being praised and they can read at grade level and they're less likely to drop out, and it turns out that when they're succeeding at school and they've got resources, they're less likely to get pregnant as teens and less likely to engage in drugs and less likely to be involved in the criminal justice system—that is a reinforcement of the values and characters that we want.

And that's where we, as a society, have the capacity to make a real difference. But it will cost us some money. It will cost us some money. It's not free.

You look at a State like California that used to have, by far, the best public higher education system in the world, and there is a direct correlation between Proposition 13 and the slow disinvestment in the public university system, so that it became very, very expensive. And kids got priced out of the market, or they started taking on a whole bunch of debt. Now, that was a public policy choice, based on folks not wanting to pay property taxes. And that's true in cities and counties and States all across the country. And that's really a big part of our political argument.

So I am all for values; I am all for character. But I also know that that character and that values—the values that our kids have that allow them to succeed, and delayed gratification and discipline and hard work—that all those things in part are shaped by what they see, what they see really early on. And they're—and some of those kids right now, because of no fault of those kids and because of history and some tough going, generationally, some of those kids, they're not going to get help at home. They're not going to get enough help at home. And the question then becomes, are we committed to helping them instead?

Mr. Putnam. That's right.

Mr. Dionne. Mr. President, I want to follow up on that and then invite Arthur and Bob to reply. Arthur, you clearly got a plenary indulgence in this session on all kinds of positions. [*Laughter*]

The—a lot of us, I think, feel that we made bargains with our friends on the conservative side that—I agree with the idea that you've got to care about what happens in the family if you're going to care about social justice, and you've got to care about social justice if you care about the family. Yet, when people like you start talking like this, there doesn't seem to be much giveback on, "Okay, we agree on these values; where's the investment in these kids?"

Similarly, when welfare reform was passed back in the nineties, there were a lot of people who said, okay, we're not going to hear about welfare cheats anymore because all these people are going to have to work. And yet we get the same thing back again. It's as if the work requirement was never put in the welfare bill. How do we change this conversation so that it becomes an actual bargain where the other half of the agenda that you talked about gets recognized and that we do something about it?

The President. I'm going to—I'll ask Arthur for some advice on this. [*Laughter*] Because, look, the devil is in the details. I think if you talk to any of my Republican friends, they will say, number one, they care about the poor. And I believe them. Number two, they'll say that there are some public goods that have to be made, and I'll believe them. But when it comes to actually establishing budgets, making choices, prioritizing, that's when it starts breaking down.

And I actually think that there will come a time when political pressure leads to a shift, because more and more families—not just inner-city African American families or Hispanic families in the barrios, but more and more middle class or working class folks are feeling pinched and squeezed—that there will be a greater demand for some core public goods and we'll have to find a way to pay for them. But ultimately, there are going to have to be some choices made.

When I, for example, make an argument about closing the carried interest loophole that exists whereby hedge fund managers are paying 15 percent on the fees and income that they collect, I've been called Hitler for doing this, or at least, this is like Hitler going into Poland. That's an actual quote from a hedge fund manager when I made that recommendation. The top 25 hedge fund managers made more than all the kindergarten teachers in the country.

So I'm not—when I say that, I'm not saying that because I dislike hedge fund managers or I think they're evil. I'm saying that you're paying a lower rate than a lot of folks who are making $300,000 a year. You've—you pretty much have more than you'll ever be able to use and your family will ever be able to use. There's a fairness issue involved here. And by the way, if we were able to close that loophole, I can now invest in early childhood education that will make a difference. That's where the rubber hits the road.

Right? That's, Arthur, where the question of compassion and "I'm my brother's keeper" comes into play. And if we can't ask from society's lottery winners to just make that modest investment, then, really, this conversation is for show.

If we can't ask that much, right? So—[*applause*]. And that's where—and by the way, I'm not asking to go back to 70-percent marginal rates, which existed back in the golden days that Bob is talking about when he was a kid. I'm just saying maybe we can go up to, like, tax them like ordinary incomes, which means that they might have to pay a true rate of around 23, 25 percent, which, by historical standards, postwar era, would still be really low.

So that's the kind of issue where, if we can't bridge that gap, then I suspect we're not going to make as much progress as we need to, although we can find some areas of agreement like the earned-income credit, which I give Arthur a lot of credit for extolling because it encourages work and it could help actually strengthen families.

Mr. Dionne. So, Arthur, raise capital gains taxes for us here.

Mr. Brooks. Yes, sure. Sure. Fine. These are show issues. Corporate jets are show issues. Carried interest is a show issue. The real issue? Middle class entitlements, 70 percent of the Federal budget. That's where the real money is. And the truth of the matter is, until we can take that on—if we want to make progress, if the left and right want to make progress politically as they put together budgets, they're going to have to make progress on that.

Now, if we want to create—if we want to increase taxes on carried interest, I mean, that's fine for me, not that I can speak for everybody, certainly not everybody on the Republican side.

And by the way, Mitch McConnell and John Boehner are watching, at least indirectly, and they're paying attention to this—hundred-percent sure—because they care a lot about this. And they care a lot about both culture and economics, and they care a lot about poverty. And again, we have to be really careful not to impugn their motives, and impugning motives on the other side is the number-one barrier against making progress. Ad hominem is something we should declare war on and defeat

because then we can take on issues on their face, I think. It's really important morally for us to be able to do that.

Who, by the way was—were you having dinner with who was discussing Ayn Rand, and why wasn't I invited? [*Laughter*]

So if we want to make progress, I think let's decide that we have a preference—I mean, let's have a rumble over how much money we're spending on public goods for poor people, for sure. And Republicans should say, I want to spend money on programs for the poor, but I think these ones are counterproductive and I think these ones are ineffective, and Democrats should say, no they're not, we've never done them right and they've always been underfunded. I want to have that competition of ideas. That's really productive.

But we can't even get to that when politicians on the left and the right are conspiring to not touch middle class entitlements, because we're looking at it in terms of the right saying all the money is gone on this, and the left saying all we need is a lot more money on top of these things, when most people who are looking at it realize that this is an unsustainable path. It's an unsustainable path for lots of things, not just programs for the poor. We can't adequately fund our military.

I think you and I have—would have a tremendous amount of agreement about the misguided notion of the sequester and for lots of reasons, because we can't spend money on purpose. And that's what we need to do. And when we're on an automatic path to spend tons of money in entitlements that are leading us to fiscal unsustainability, we can't get to these progressive conversations where conservatives and liberals really disagree and can work together, potentially, to help poor people and defend our Nation.

Mr. Dionne. I just want to say if the carried interest is a show issue, why can't we just get it out of the way and move forward? [*Laughter*] But that's, well——

The President. It is real money. It's real money.

Mr. Dionne. Yes. Let me—here is what I'd like to do. I think we have about 3 minutes left, so I'd like Bob to speak, and then I have one last question for the President.

Mr. Putnam. Well, I—probably, all of us would agree about this: We need to a little bit rise out of the Washington bubble and the debates about these things. Of course, they're important. I understand why they're important. But actually, we're speaking here to an audience of people of faith. We're speaking largely, more largely, to America. And I think we ought not to disempower ordinary Americans. If they care about these problems, Americans can change the politics that would, over the next 5 to 10 years, make a huge difference.

And I'm not talking about changing Republican-Democrat, I'm talking about making poverty and the opportunity to escape from poverty a higher issue on both parties' agendas. I have some hope that that will happen. I understand—this may not be true, Mr. President—I understand that there is going to be an election next year. [*Laughter*]

The President. That's a true fact. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Putnam. That's a true fact. [*Laughter*] And I think American voters should insist that the highest domestic priority issue is this issue of the opportunity gap, the fact that we're talking about. This is not a third-order issue, it's a really important issue. And ask candidates, what are you going to do about it? And then, just use your own common sense. Is that the right way to go forward?

I think that we need, as a country, not just from the top down and from Washington, but from across the grassroots, to focus—and in congregations and parishes all across this country—focus on what we can do to reduce this opportunity gap in America.

Mr. Dionne. Mr. President, I wanted you to reflect on this religious question. I mean, your—one of your first salaries was actually paid for by a group of Catholic churches, something—Cardinal McCarrick knows that, but not a lot of Catholic bishops noticed that—[*laughter*]—that you were organizing for a group of South Side churches. You know what faith-based groups can do. And I'd like you to talk about sort of three things at the same time, which is the role of the religious community

simply in calling attention to this problem, the issues of how government can cooperate with these groups, and sort of the prophetic role of these ideas for you, where your own reflections on your own faith have led you on these questions.

The President. Well, first of all, it's true, my first job was funded through the Campaign for Human Development, which was the social justice arm of the Catholic Church. And I think that faith-based groups across the country and around the world understand the centrality and the importance of this issue in a intimate way, in part because these faith-based organizations are interacting with folks who are struggling and know how good these people are and know their stories, and it's not just theological, but it's very concrete. They're embedded in communities, and they're making a difference in all kinds of ways.

So I think that what our administration has done is really a continuation of work that had been done previously by the Bush administration, the Clinton administration. We've got a—our office of faith-based organizations that are working on an ongoing basis around a whole host of these issues. "My Brother's Keeper" is reaching out to churches and synagogues and mosques and other faith-based groups consistently to try to figure out, how do we reach young boys and young men in a serious way?

But the one thing I guess I want to say, E.J., is that when I think about my own Christian faith and my obligations, it is important for me to do what I can myself, individually mentoring young people or making charitable donations or in some ways impacting whatever circles of influence I have. But I also think it's important to have a voice in the larger debate. And I think it would be powerful for our faith-based organizations to speak out on this in a more forceful fashion.

This may sound self-interested, because there have been—these are areas where I agree with the evangelical community and faith-based groups, and then, there are issues where we have had disagreements around reproductive issues or same-sex marriage or what have you. And so maybe it appears advantageous for me to want to focus on these issues of poverty and not as much on these other issues.

But I want to insist, first of all, I don't have—I will not be part of the election next year—[*laughter*]—so this is more just a broader reflection of somebody who has worked with churches and worked in communities.

There is great caring and great concern, but when it comes to what are you really going to the mat for, like, what's the defining issue, when you're talking in your congregations, what's the thing that is really going to capture the essence of who we are as Christians or as Catholics or what have you, that this is oftentimes viewed as a "nice to have" relative to an issue like abortion. That's not across the board, but there sometimes has been that view, and certainly, that's how it's perceived in our political circles.

And I think that there's more power to be had there, a more transformative voice that's available around these issues that can move and touch people. Because the one thing I know is that—here's an area where, again, Arthur and I agree—I think fundamentally people want to do the right thing. I think people don't set out wanting to be selfish. I think people would like to see a society in which everybody has opportunity. I think that's true up and down the line, across the board. And—but they feel as if it's not possible.

And there's noise out there, and there's arguments, and there's contention. And so people withdraw, and they restrict themselves to, what can I do in my church, or what can I do in my community? And that's important. But our faith-based groups I think have the capacity to frame this, and nobody has shown that better than Pope Francis, who I think has been transformative just through the sincerity and insistence that he's had that this is vital to who we are. This is vital to following what Jesus Christ, our Savior, talked about.

And that emphasis, I think, is why he's had such incredible appeal, including to young people, all around the world. And I hope that that is a message that everybody receives when he comes to visit here. I can't wait to host him because I think it will help to spark an even

broader conversation of the sort that we're having today.

Mr. Dionne. All events are better with a reference to Pope Francis. Thank you so much, Mr. President.

I really want to thank Arthur and Bob. And thank you, Bob, for writing this book that's moved us all. And thank you, Mr. President, for being here. And John for—and Galen and so many others for creating this.

If I may close by simultaneously quoting Amos and Dr. King, "Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream. Bless you all."

Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:39 a.m. in Gaston Hall. In his remarks, he referred to John J. DeGioia, president, Georgetown University; William Julius Wilson, Lewis P. and Linda L. Geyser University Professor, Harvard University; Stephen A. Schwarzman, chairman and chief executive officer, Blackstone Group; and former President George W. Bush. Mr. Dionne referred to David Brooks, columnist, New York Times; John Carr, director, Georgetown University's Initiative on Catholic Social Thought and Public Life; Galen Carey, vice president and chief operations officer, National Association of Evangelicals; Jim Wallis, author and editor-in-chief, Sojourners magazine; Ta-Nehisi Coates, national correspondent, the Atlantic magazine; and Theodor E. McCarrick, archbishob emeritus of Washington, DC, and counselor, Center for Strategic and International Studies. Mr. Putnam referred to William H. Gates III, founder, technology adviser, and board member, Microsoft Corp. Mr. Brooks referred to Robert Doar, Morgridge Fellow in Poverty Studies, American Enterprise Institute; and James Olson, senior lecturer, Texas A&M University's Bush School of Government and Public Service.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Crown Prince Muhammad bin Nayif bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia and an Exchange With Reporters
May 13, 2015

The President. Well, it's wonderful to welcome back the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, Muhammad bin Nayif, as well as Deputy Crown Prince Salman. We are very pleased to have them both here today, as well as the delegation from Saudi Arabia.

As all of you are aware, the United States and Saudi Arabia have an extraordinary friendship and relationship that dates back to Franklin Roosevelt and King Faisal, and we are continuing to build that relationship during a very challenging time.

This gives us an opportunity to discuss some of the bilateral issues, including the crisis in Yemen and how we can build on the cease-fire that's been established to restore a process for an inclusive, legitimate Government inside of Yemen. And it will also give us a chance to discuss some of the broader issues that will be the topic of the GCC-U.S. summit tomorrow.

I can say that, on a personal level, my work and the U.S. Government's work with these two individuals, and Crown Prince bin Nayif, on counterterrorism issues has been absolutely critical not only to maintaining stability in the region, but also protecting the American people. And I want to thank them for their extraordinary support and hard work and coordination on our counterterrorism efforts. And they came in as a critical component of our coalition in the fight against ISIL, and I'm sure that we'll have opportunities to discuss as well the progress that's been made in the fight against ISIL in Iraq, as well as the continuing crisis in Syria and the importance of us addressing not only the humanitarian crisis, but the need to bring about a more inclusive and legitimate Government there.

So, Your Royal Highness, thank you so much for your presence here today and for your longstanding friendship. Thank you.

Crown Prince Muhammad bin Nayif. I want to thank the President for your kind invitation extended to me and to His Royal Highness, the Deputy Crown Prince. I wish to convey to you the greetings and appreciation of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abd, who attaches—along with everybody in the Kingdom—great importance to the strategic and historic relationship between our two countries.

This historic relationship we seek to strengthen and broaden and deepen with time. Mr. President, you spoke about the situation in the region, and we look forward to, God willing, to working with you to overcome the challenges and to bring about calm and stability in the region.

Once again, Mr. President, I want to thank you for this meeting.

President Obama. Thank you, everybody.

Iran

Q. Mr. President, what do you plan to tell the GCC leaders about Iran and the nuclear deal?

President Obama. We'll have a whole press conference, Julie. You'll get all kinds of questions.

Q. I'm holding you to that.

President Obama. Thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:16 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Deputy Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia. He also referred to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC); and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization. Crown Prince Muhammad bin Nayif referred to King Salman bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia. Crown Prince Muhammad bin Nayif spoke in Arabic, and his remarks were translated by Minister of Foreign Affairs Adil al-Ahmad al-Jubayr of Saudi Arabia.

Statement on the Crash of Amtrak Train 188 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
May 13, 2015

Along with Americans across our country, Michelle and I were shocked and deeply saddened to hear of the derailment aboard Amtrak Train 188. Our thoughts and prayers go out to the families and friends of those we lost last night and to the many passengers who today begin their long road to recovery. Along the Northeast Corridor, Amtrak is a way of life for many. From Washington, DC, and Philadelphia, to New York City and Boston, this is a tragedy that touches us all. As we work to determine exactly what happened, I commend the fire, police, and medical personnel working tirelessly and professionally to save lives. Philadelphia is known as the city of brotherly love—a city of neighborhoods and neighbors—and that spirit of loving-kindness was reaffirmed last night, as hundreds of first responders and passengers lent a hand to their fellow human beings in need.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Yemen
May 13, 2015

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13611 of

May 16, 2012, with respect to Yemen is to continue in effect beyond May 16, 2015.

The actions and policies of certain members of the Government of Yemen and others continue to threaten Yemen's peace, security, and stability, including by obstructing the implementation of the agreement of November 23, 2011, between the Government of Yemen and those in opposition to it, which provided for a peaceful transition of power that meets the legitimate demands and aspirations of the Yemeni people for change, and by obstructing the political process in Yemen. For this reason, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13611 with respect to Yemen.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
May 13, 2015.

NOTE: The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

The President's News Conference at Camp David, Maryland
May 14, 2015

Crash of Amtrak Train 188 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

The President. Good evening. Before I get to what we discussed here today with our Gulf partners, I want to again express my deepest condolences to the families of those who died in Tuesday's terrible train derailment outside of Philadelphia. I want to express my gratitude for the first responders who raced to save lives and for the many passengers who, despite their own injuries, made heroic efforts to get fellow passengers to safety.

For a lot of people on that train, it was a routine journey: a commute, a business trip. For the Amtrak employees who were badly hurt, it was their office, place of doing business. And that somehow makes it all the more tragic.

Until we know for certain what caused this tragedy, I just want reiterate what I have already said: that we are a growing country, with a growing economy. We need to invest in the infrastructure that keeps us that way and not just when something bad happens, like a bridge collapse or a train derailment, but all the time. That's what great nations do.

So I offer my prayers for those who grieve, a speedy recovery for the many who were injured as they work to recover. And we will cooperate, obviously, at every level of government to make sure that we get answers in terms of precisely what happened.

Gulf Cooperation Council-U.S. Meetings

Now, to the work that brought us to Camp David: For the past 70 years, the United States has maintained a core national security interest in the security and the stability of the Middle East generally, and the Gulf region specifically. This is a fundamental tenet of American foreign policy, upheld by generations of American servicemembers and reaffirmed by every U.S. President, including me.

Since I took office, we've intensified our security cooperation with our Gulf Cooperation Council partners: Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, and Bahrain. At a time of extraordinary challenges across the Middle East, including conflicts that have caused untold human suffering, the United States and our GCC partners cooperate extensively, countering terrorist groups like Al Qaida and now ISIL, opposing the Asad regime's war against the Syrian people, supporting the legitimate Government of Yemen, and opposing Iran's destabilizing actions across the Middle East.

I invited our GCC partners here today to deepen our cooperation and to work together to resolve conflicts across the region. I want to thank each of the leaders and delegations who attended.

And we approached our discussions in a spirit of mutual respect. We agree that the security relationship between the United States

and our GCC partners will remain a cornerstone of regional stability and our relationship is a two-way street. We all have responsibilities. And here at Camp David, we decided to expand our partnership in several important and concrete ways.

First, I am reaffirming our ironclad commitment to the security of our Gulf partners. As we've declared in our joint statement, the United States is prepared to work jointly with GCC member states to defer—deter and confront an external threat to any GCC state's territorial integrity that is inconsistent with the U.N. Charter. In the event of such aggression or the threat of such aggression, the United States stands ready to work with our GCC partners to urgently determine what actions may be appropriate, using the means at our collective disposal, including the potential use of military force, for the defense of our GCC partners. And let me underscore, the United States keeps our commitments.

Second, and to back up our words with deeds, we will increase our already extensive security cooperation. We'll expand our military exercises and assistance to meet the full range of threats, in particular, terrorism. This means more training and cooperation between our special operations forces, sharing more information and stronger border security to prevent the flow of foreign fighters, and increased enforcement to prevent terrorist financing. We'll step up our efforts to counter violent extremism, including online. And more broadly, we'll expand our cooperation on maritime security and work to harden our partners' critical infrastructure.

Third, we'll help our Gulf partners improve their own capacity to defend themselves. The United States will streamline and expedite the transfer of critical defense capabilities to our GCC partners. We will work together to develop an integrated GCC defense capability against ballistic missiles, including an early warning system. And we will work toward the development of rapid response capabilities to undertake missions such as counterterrorism and peacekeeping.

Fourth, we pledged to work together to try to resolve armed conflicts in the region, and we have articulated core principles to guide our efforts: respect for state sovereignty, recognition that these conflicts can only be resolved politically, and acknowledgment of the importance of inclusive governance and the need to respect minorities and protect human rights.

Therefore, with respect to Syria, we committed to continuing to strengthen the moderate opposition, to oppose all violent extremist groups, and to intensify our efforts to achieve a negotiated political transition towards an inclusive Government—without Bashar Asad—that serves all Syrians.

We will continue to support the Iraqi Government in its efforts against ISIL and in reforms to ensure that the rights and opportunities of all Iraqis are fully respected. We welcomed the humanitarian truce in Yemen so urgently needed aid can reach civilians, and we call on all parties in Yemen to return to political talks facilitated by the United Nations. We will step up our collective efforts to help form a national unity government in Libya and counter the growing terrorist presence there. And we reiterate the urgent need for a two-state solution between Israelis and Palestinians.

Fifth, we spent considerable time discussing Iran. I updated our Gulf partners on the negotiations towards a comprehensive deal to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon. And I'm pleased that here at Camp David we agree that a comprehensive, verifiable solution that fully addresses the regional and international concerns about Iran's nuclear program is in the international—is in the security interests of the international community, including our GCC partners.

Of course, whether we reach a nuclear deal or not with Iran, we're still going to face a range of threats across the region, including its destabilizing activities, as well as the threat from terrorist groups. So we're going to work together to address these threats. And much of the enhanced security cooperation that I've outlined will allow us to do precisely that.

But I want to be very clear. The purpose of security cooperation is not to perpetuate any

long-term confrontation with Iran or even to marginalize Iran. None of our nations have an interest in an open-ended conflict with Iran. We welcome an Iran that plays a responsible role in the region, one that takes concrete, practical steps to build trust and resolve its differences with its neighbors by peaceful means and abides by international rules and norms.

As I've said before, ending the tensions in the region and resolving its devastating conflicts will require a broader dialogue, one that includes Iran and its GCC neighbors. And so a key purpose of bolstering the capacity of our GCC partners is to ensure that our partners can deal with Iran politically, diplomatically, from a position of confidence and strength.

And finally, while this summit was focused on security cooperation, events in the Middle East since the beginning of the Arab Spring are a reminder that true and lasting security includes governance that serves all citizens and respects universal human rights. So in the Middle East, as we do around the world, the United States will continue to speak out on behalf of inclusive governance, representation—representative institutions, strong civil societies and human rights, and we will work to expand the educational and economic opportunities that allow people—especially young people—to fulfill their potential.

So again, I want to thank all of our GCC partners for making this summit a success. I believe that the Camp David commitments I've described today can mark the beginning of a new era of cooperation between our countries, a closer, stronger partnership that advances our mutual security for decades to come.

So with that, I'm going to take some questions. And I will start with Julie Pace [Associated Press] because I promised her in the Oval Office that I'd call on her.

Q. You did. Thank you very much.

The President. Yes.

Iran

Q. You mentioned in your statement the broad support from the GCC for stopping Iran from getting a nuclear weapon.

The President. Yes.

Q. Did you get any specific commitments from the Gulf leaders for the framework that you reached a few months ago, and at least a commitment to not publicly oppose a deal if you're able to reach that?

And on the Gulf's main concern, Iran's destabilizing activity in the region, how can you really assure them that Iran would not continue that activity if they had an influx of money from sanctions relief when they're already accused of doing so now with a weaker economy?

The President. We didn't have a document that we presented to them to sign on the bottom line, will you approve of this nuclear framework deal, because the deal is not completed. And in the same way that I wouldn't ask the United States Senate to—or the American people—to sign off on something before they've actually seen the details of it, and given that I'm not going to sign off on any deal until I've seen the details of it, I wouldn't expect them to either.

What I did hear from our GCC partners was their agreement that if we can get a comprehensive, verifiable deal that cuts off the pathways to a nuclear weapon, that that would be in their interests and the interests of the region, as well as the world community.

And so the question is then going to be, is Iran prepared to do what's required for the international community to feel confidence that, in fact, it's not developing a nuclear weapon, and have we set up the kinds of inspection regimes that allow such confidence to be maintained, not just next year or 5 years from now, but out into the future?

So what we did was, we had Secretary Kerry, Secretary Ernie Moniz—who obviously was involved in the negotiations as well—to walk through why it was that we were confident that if the framework agreement we've arrived at were to be solidified, that, in fact, we could verify that they did not have a nuclear weapon. And that was important to them and, I think, gave them additional confidence.

There was a concern—a concern that I share—that even if we deal effectively with the nuclear issue that we will still have a problem

with some of Iran's destabilizing activities. And a number of them did express the concern that with additional resources through the reduction in sanctions, that, was it possible that Iran would siphon off a lot of these resources into more destabilizing activity?

Secretary Jack Lew was there to explain that, first of all, there would be no sanctions relief until we could confirm that Iran had actually carried out its obligations under any nuclear deal. Secondly, we gave them our best analysis of the enormous needs that Iran has internally and the commitment that Iran has made to its people in terms of shoring up its economy and improving economic growth.

And as I pointed out, most of the destabilizing activity that Iran engages in is low-tech, low-cost activity. And so part of my emphasis to them was that if we are focusing more effectively on the things we need to do—to shore up defenses, improve intelligence, improve the capacity for maritime monitoring of what's taking place in the Gulf—if we are working in concert to address the terrorist activity and countering terrorist messages that are coming not just from state sponsors like Iran, but more broadly, from organizations like ISIL, then we're going to be able to fortify ourselves and deal with many of these challenges much more effectively, and we can do so from a position of strength and confidence.

So it's not to deny the concerns that were there about what happens when sanctions are reduced, but it was to emphasize that what matters more is the things that we can do now to ensure that some of this destabilizing activity is no longer taking place.

And of course, when you look at a place like Yemen, the issue there is that the state itself was crumbling and that if we can do a better job in places like Syria, Yemen, Libya, in building up functioning political structures, then it's less likely that anybody, including Iran, can exploit some of the divisions that exist there.

Michael Viqueira [Al Jazeera America].

Syria/Arctic Oil Drilling

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. On Syria, one of the reasons we're here is because many of the nations in the region were upset that more than 2 years ago when Bashar al-Asad deployed chemical weapons, there was no military response as you appeared to promise, no retaliation on the part of the U.S. part. Now there's a possibility that Asad has once again used chemical weapons. What did you tell these leaders here who are disappointed last time? And will you use a military response if it's confirmed that he used chemical weapons again, once again deployed them?

And if I could ask you a domestic question as well, sir. And this one is about the environment and the drilling that's recently been approved in the Arctic. This Nation, the United States, is now a net exporter for the first time in years of fossil fuels, partly due to fracking, something that environmentalists have objected to, something that you regard as an "all of the above" energy strategy. The oil company, Shell, has had a very mixed record of drilling in that region. Many environmentalists look at this and say, is it really worth the risk to drill in such a delicate ecosystem? Thank you.

The President. Well, first of all, Michael, I don't know why you're here, but the reason I'm here is not because of what happened in Syria a couple of years ago. The reason I'm here is because we've got extraordinary challenges throughout the region, not just in Syria, but in Iraq and Yemen and Libya and obviously the developments of ISIL and our interest in making sure that we don't have a nuclear weapon in Iran.

With respect to Syria, my commitment was to make sure that Syria was not using chemical weapons and mobilizing the international community to assure that that would not happen. And in fact, we positioned ourselves to be willing to take military action. The reason we did not was because Asad gave up his chemical weapons. And that's not speculation on our part. That, in fact, has been confirmed by the organization internationally that is charged with eliminating chemical weapons.

And I don't think that there is—are a lot of folks in the region who are disappointed that Asad is no longer in possession of one of the

biggest stockpiles of chemical weapons of any country on Earth. Those have been eliminated.

It is true that we've seen reports about the use of chlorine in bombs that have the effect of chemical weapons. Chlorine itself, historically, has not been listed as a chemical weapon, but when it is used in this fashion can be considered a prohibited use of that particular chemical. And so we're working with the international community to investigate that.

And in fact, if we have the kinds of confirmation that we need, we will, once again, work with the international community and the organization charged with monitoring compliance by the Syrian Government, and we will reach out to patrons of Asad, like Russia, to put a stop to it.

With respect to the situation in the Arctic, I think it's fair to say that I know a little something about the risks of offshore drilling given what happened in the Gulf very early in my Presidency. And so nobody is more mindful of the risks involved and the dangers. That's why, despite the fact that Shell had put in an application for exploration in this region several years ago, we delayed it for a very lengthy period of time until they could provide us with the kinds of assurances that we have not seen before, taking account of the extraordinary challenges if in fact there was a leak that far north and in that kind of an environment, which would be much more difficult to deal with than in the Gulf. Based on those very high standards, Shell had to go back to the drawing board, revamp its approach, and the experts at this point have concluded that they have met those standards.

But keep in mind that my approach when it comes to fracking, drilling, U.S. energy production of oil or natural gas has remained consistent throughout: I believe that we are going to have to transition off of fossil fuels as a planet in order to prevent climate change. I am working internationally to reduce our carbon emissions and to replace over time fossil fuels with clean energies.

Obviously, we start at home with all the work that we've done to, for example, double the use of clean energy. But I think that it is important also to recognize that that is going to be a transition process. In the meantime, we are going to continue to be using fossil fuels. And when it can be done safely and appropriately, U.S. production of oil and natural gas is important.

I would rather us—with all the safeguards and standards that we have—be producing our oil and gas, rather than importing it, which is bad for our people, but is also potentially purchased from places that have much lower environmental standards than we do.

Toluse [Toluse Olorunnipa, Bloomberg News].

Trade Promotion Authority/Senator Elizabeth Warren/Trans-Pacific Partnership/Arab-Israeli Peace Process

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. I would like to ask you about trade.

The President. Yes.

Q. The Senate moved forward on a bill today to approve your trade legislation. And it also moved forward with a proposal to punish countries like China for what they do in terms of manipulating their currency. Could you potentially see yourself accepting Senator Schumer's language on currency manipulation? Or would you have to veto that?

And, secondly, could you also talk about your relationship with Senator Warren? Do you regret the fact that things have become so personal with the back-and-forth on trade? And then, secondly, if I could ask——

The President. How many—wait, that was the second question, wasn't it? So now, thirdly, is what you're saying.

Q. Yes.

The President. Okay. [*Laughter*]

Q. Just really quickly, you mentioned the issue of a two-state solution with Israel. I was wondering if you would give your reaction to what the Pope is moving forward with in terms of recognizing the Palestinian state. Do you think that's a good idea? Do you think it's a mistake? And do you think it might help or hinder the two-state solution that you mentioned earlier?

The President. Okay. Well, first of all, I want to congratulate the Senate on moving forward

on providing me the authority to not only strike a smart, progressive, growth-promoting trade deal with some of the countries in the Asia-Pacific region and potentially in Europe as well, but also to give me the tools to enforce those agreements, which haven't always happened in the past.

So I want to thank all the Senators who voted to provide that authority, or at least to begin the debate on moving that process forward. Those who didn't vote for it, I want to keep on trying to make the case and provide them the information they need to feel confident that despite the fact that there have been very genuine problems with some trade deals in the past, the approach that we're taking here, I think, is the right one, not just for big U.S. businesses, but also for small U.S. businesses and medium-sized U.S. businesses and, most importantly, ultimately, American workers.

I would not be promoting any agreement that I didn't think, at the end of the day, was going to be creating jobs in the United States and giving us more of an opportunity to create ladders of success, higher incomes, and higher wages for the American people, because that's my primary focus. It has been since I came into office.

The issue with respect to myself and Elizabeth has never been personal. I mean, I think it's fun for the press to see if we can poke around at it when you see two close allies who have a disagreement on a policy issue. But there are a whole bunch of—some of my best friends in the Senate, as well in the House, some of my earliest supporters who disagree with me on this. And I understand. Because, like me, they came up through the ranks watching plants close, jobs being shipped overseas. Like me, they have concerns about whether labor agreements or environmental agreements with other countries are properly enforced. Like me, they have concerns about whether in fact trade ends up being fair and not just free.

And, like me, they have a deep concern about some of the global trends that we've seen and trends that we've seen in our own country in terms of increased inequality and what appears to be the effects of automation and globalization in allowing folks at the very top to do really, really well, but creating stagnation in terms of incomes and wages for middle class families and folks working to get their way into the middle class.

So these are folks whose values are completely aligned with mine. I noticed that there was sort of a progressive statement of principles about what it means to be a progressive by some of these friends of mine, and I noted that it was basically my agenda, except for trade. [*Laughter*] Right? That was the one area where there was a significant difference. And this just comes down to a policy difference and an analysis in terms of what we think is best for our people, our constituents.

It is my firm belief that, despite the problems of previous trade deals, that we are better off writing high-standard rules with strong, enforceable provisions on things like child labor or deforestation or environmental degradation or wildlife trafficking or intellectual property; we are better off writing those rules for what is going to be the largest, fastest growing market in the world. And if we don't, China will, and other countries will. And our businesses will be disadvantaged, and our workers will ultimately suffer.

And in terms of some of the fears of outsourcing of jobs, it is my belief, based on the analysis, that at this point, if there was a company in the United States that was looking for low-cost labor, they have no problem outsourcing it under the current regime. And so what we do have the opportunity to do is to attract back companies to manufacture here in the United States.

And we're seeing some of that happen. That's why I went out to Nike. I understand that Nike has been manufacturing shoes with low-cost labor in many of these areas in the Asia-Pacific region and that hurt the American footwear industry in terms of jobs here in the United States. But that happened over the course of the last 30 years. And now, for Nike to announce that because of new technologies, they're potentially bringing 10,000 jobs back here because we've gone up the value chain,

we're manufacturing in different ways, that's an opportunity. But we've still got to be able to sell over there to take full advantage of those opportunities.

Which is why my argument with my progressive friends is, what we really need to be focusing on to meet the same objectives—the shared objectives—is the kinds of other issues that we all agree on: strong minimum wage, strong job training programs, infrastructure investments that put people back to work, stronger laws to protect collective bargaining and the capability of workers to have a voice, strong enforcement of rules around things like overtime pay, making sure that we have paid sick leave, making sure that we have a honest conversation about our budgets and that we're not slashing investments in the future simply to make sure that we're preserving loopholes for corporations that don't provide any economic benefit.

Those are the things that are going to help us address the very problems that they're concerned about. Blocking a trade deal will not, particularly since they're the first ones to acknowledge that the existing trade rules are a bad deal for U.S. workers. If they're not working for us now, how does hanging on to what's going on now help American workers? It doesn't make sense.

I'm all for enforcement and the provisions that were signed. I have expressed concerns about how the currency language that is in the bill is drafted. But I have to talk to Senator Schumer and Sherrod Brown and others about how we can work on language that does not end up having a blowback effect on our ability to maintain our own monetary policy.

I don't even remember what your other question was. [*Laughter*]

Q. The Pope——

Q. The Vatican.

The President. Oh. Well, rather than speak for others, I'll just reiterate what I've said previously. I continue to believe that a two-state solution is absolutely vital for not only peace between Israelis and Palestinians, but for the long-term security of Israel as a democratic and Jewish state.

And I know that a government has been formed that contains some folks who don't necessarily believe in that premise. But that continues to be my premise. And since we're up here at Camp David, I think it's important to remind ourselves of the degree to which a very hard peace deal that required incredible vision and courage and tough choices resulted in what's now been a lasting peace between countries that used to be sworn enemies. And Israel is better off for it. I think the same would be true if we get a peace deal between Israelis and Palestinians.

That prospect seems distant now. But I think it's always important for us to keep in mind what's right and what's possible.

Okay. Last question. Scott Horsley [NPR].

Overtime Regulations/Transportation Infrastructure Legislation

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. You mentioned at the outset our need for a world-class infrastructure. We're coming up on a deadline for the Highway Trust Fund. With gas prices where they are, why isn't this a good time to consider a hike in the Federal gas tax, which might also serve some of the carbon goals you talked about?

The President. Yes.

Q. And since you mentioned the overtime rules, I know it's been about 14 months since you asked the Labor Department to put those together. They went over to OMB last week. How soon might we see those?

The President. Soon.

And with respect to transportation, you're absolutely right that now is the time for us to get something done. I'm practical, and in order for us to get a transportation bill done, I've got to get cooperation from a Republican-controlled Congress. And so I'm in discussions with the majority and minority leaders in both Chambers, as well as the relevant committee chairpersons. We want to hear their ideas. We want to find out what's possible. I think that that's going to be something that we need to explore.

But this is not an area where either side should be looking for political points. This did

not used to be a partisan issue. Building roads, building bridges, building airports, sewer lines, dams, ports—this is how we grow. This is how America became an economic superpower, was investing in our people, investing in infrastructure, doing it better and faster and bigger than anybody else did. We should be doing the same thing now.

The first Republican President, a proud native of my home State named Mr. Lincoln, even in the midst of civil war was looking at how we join the country together through our railways and our canals. We shouldn't be thinking smaller today. We need to be thinking bigger in this global economy.

So my hope is, is that we have a chance to have a serious discussion and look at all potential revenue sources. What is absolutely true is, is that the Highway Trust Fund has consistently gotten smaller and smaller and smaller and inadequate for the needs. What's also true is patchwork approaches of 3 months or 6 months at a time don't make any sense. We need some sort of long-term solution.

Nobody foresaw that we could actually get a "doc fix" done and actually solve the long-term problem there in terms of how we were managing Medicare payments for doctors. Who knows? Maybe we might see some intelligent bipartisan outbreaks over the next few months, because I think everybody recognizes this is important. All right?

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 5:53 p.m. in the Aspen Cabin. In his remarks, the President referred to President Bashar al-Asad of Syria; and House Majority Leader Kevin O. McCarthy and Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

Joint Statement—United States-Gulf Cooperation Council Camp David Joint Statement
May 14, 2015

President Obama and Heads of Delegations of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states, the Secretary General of the GCC, and members the President's Cabinet met today at Camp David to reaffirm and deepen the strong partnership and cooperation between the United States and the GCC. The leaders underscored their mutual commitment to a U.S.-GCC strategic partnership to build closer relations in all fields, including defense and security cooperation, and develop collective approaches to regional issues in order to advance their shared interest in stability and prosperity.

The United States shares with our GCC partners a deep interest in a region that is peaceful and prosperous, and a vital interest in supporting the political independence and territorial integrity, safe from external aggression, of our GCC partners. The United States policy to use all elements of power to secure our core interests in the Gulf region, and to deter and confront external aggression against our allies and partners, as we did in the Gulf War, is unequivocal.

The United States is prepared to work jointly with the GCC states to deter and confront an external threat to any GCC state's territorial integrity that is inconsistent with the UN Charter. In the event of such aggression or the threat of such aggression, the United States stands ready to work with our GCC partners to determine urgently what action may be appropriate, using the means at our collective disposal, including the potential use of military force, for the defense of our GCC partners.

As with Operation Decisive Storm, GCC states will consult with the United States when planning to take military action beyond GCC borders, in particular when U.S. assistance is requested for such action.

In this spirit, and building on the U.S.-GCC Strategic Cooperation Forum, the leaders discussed a new U.S.-GCC strategic partnership to enhance their work to improve security

cooperation, especially on fast-tracking arms transfers, as well as on counter-terrorism, maritime security, cybersecurity, and ballistic missile defense. They reviewed the status of negotiations between the P5+1 and Iran, and emphasized that a comprehensive, verifiable deal that fully addresses the regional and international concerns about Iran's nuclear program is in the security interests of GCC member states as well as the United States and the international community. The United States and GCC member states oppose and will work together to counter Iran's destabilizing activities in the region and stressed the need for Iran to engage the region according to the principles of good neighborliness, strict non-interference in domestic affairs, and respect for territorial integrity, consistent with international law and the United Nations Charter, and for Iran to take concrete, practical steps to build trust and resolve its differences with neighbors by peaceful means.

The leaders decided to enhance their counter-terrorism cooperation on shared threats, particularly ISIL/DAESH and Al-Qa'ida, to deter and disrupt terrorist attacks with a focus on protecting critical infrastructure, strengthening border and aviation security, combating money laundering and terrorist financing, interdicting foreign fighters, and countering violent extremism in all its forms.

The leaders, furthermore, discussed how best to address regional conflicts and defuse growing tensions. In this context, the leaders discussed the most pressing conflicts in the region, including Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and Libya, and what could be done to advance their resolution. They decided on a set of common principles, including a shared recognition that there is no military solution to the regions' armed civil conflicts, which can only be resolved through political and peaceful means; respect for all states' sovereignty and non-interference in their internal affairs; the need for inclusive governance in conflict-ridden societies; as well as protection of all minorities and of human rights.

With regard to Yemen, both the United States and GCC member states underscored the imperative of collective efforts to counter Al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula, and emphasized the need to rapidly shift from military operations to a political process, through the Riyadh Conference under GCC auspices and UN-facilitated negotiations based on the GCC initiative, National Comprehensive Dialogue outcomes, and the Security Council's relevant resolutions. Taking into consideration the humanitarian needs of civilians, they welcomed the start of a five-day humanitarian pause to facilitate delivery of relief assistance to all those in need and expressed hope it would develop into a longer, more sustainable ceasefire. They expressed their appreciation for the generous grant of $274 million provided by Saudi Arabia for the UN humanitarian response in Yemen. The United States reaffirmed its commitment, in partnership with GCC member states and other members of the international community, to seek to prevent the resupply of Houthi forces and their allies in contravention of UN Security Council Resolution 2216.

The United States and GCC member states further affirmed their commitment to assisting the Iraqi government and the international coalition in their fight against ISIL/DAESH. They stressed the importance of strengthening ties between GCC member states and the Iraqi government, based on the principles of good neighborliness, non-interference in internal affairs, and respect for state sovereignty. They encouraged the Iraqi government to achieve genuine national reconciliation by urgently addressing the legitimate grievances of all components of Iraqi society through the implementation of reforms agreed upon last summer and by ensuring that all armed groups operate under the strict control of the Iraqi state.

The leaders committed to continue working towards a sustainable political resolution in Syria that ends the war and establishes an inclusive government that protects all ethnic and religious minorities, and preserves state institutions. They reaffirmed that Assad has lost all legitimacy and has no role in Syria's future. They strongly supported increased efforts to degrade and ultimately destroy ISIL/DAESH in Syria and warned against the influence of

other extremist groups, such as Al-Nusrah, that represent a danger to the Syrian people, to the region and to the international community. They expressed deep concern over the continuing deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Syria and condemned the prevention of aid distribution to the civilian population by the Assad regime or any other party.

The leaders decided to move in concert to convince all Libyan parties to accept an inclusive power-sharing agreement based on proposals put forward by the UN and to focus on countering the growing terrorist presence in the country.

The United States and GCC member states strongly affirmed the necessity of resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on the basis of a just, lasting, comprehensive peace agreement that results in an independent and contiguous Palestinian state living side-by-side in peace and security with Israel. To that end, the United States and GCC member states underscored the enduring importance of the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative and the urgent need for the parties to demonstrate—through policies and actions—genuine advancement of a two-state solution, and decided to remain closely engaged moving forward. The United States and GCC member states also recommitted to continue to fulfill aggressively their pledges made for Gaza's reconstruction, to include pledges made at the October 2014 Cairo Conference.

The leaders expressed their concern over the delay in electing a new president of Lebanon, called on all parties to strengthen Lebanese state institutions, and emphasized the critical importance of Lebanon's parliament moving forward to elect a president of the Lebanese Republic in accordance with the constitution. The leaders also emphasized their determination to support the Government of Lebanon in its resistance to ISIL/DAESH and Al-Nusrah which threaten Lebanon's security and stability.

The leaders pledged to further deepen U.S.-GCC relations on these and other issues in order to build an even stronger, enduring, and comprehensive strategic partnership aimed at enhancing regional stability and prosperity. They agreed to meet again in a similar high level format in 2016, in order to advance and build upon the US-GCC Strategic Partnership announced today.

NOTE: The joint statement referred to President Bashar al-Asad of Syria; and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization. An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement, which was supplemented by an annex released by the Office of the Press Secretary.

Remarks at the National Peace Officers Memorial Service
May 15, 2015

Thank you so much. Please be seated. Thank you, Chuck, for that kind introduction, for your years of proud service, not only as a police officer, but for all the advocacy that you do on behalf of law enforcement and their families. I want to thank the entire Fraternal Order of Police and its leadership, including Jim Pasco and Linda Hennie, for everything that you do to support those who protect and serve.

U.S. Marine Corps Helicopter Crash in Nepal

Let me also say that as we gather here today, our prayers remain with the families of our marines and two Nepalese soldiers, now that the wreckage of their helicopter has been found in a remote part of Nepal. They went to that remote land to help people who suffered devastating losses in a terrible earthquake. They represent a truth that guides our work around the world: When our friends are in need, America helps.

Sometimes, those in uniform get attention only when there's a battle. But they do so much more than that, looking out for folks who are vulnerable or having a tough time, if—experienced a disaster. And it can involve great risk and great sacrifice. And we give thanks to

all our fellow Americans, military and civilian, who reflect the very best of American leadership around the world. The world is better for them.

We are here to honor heroes who have lost their lives in the line of duty, men and women who put themselves in the way of danger so that the rest of us could live in safety. They were beat cops, deputies, detectives, correctional and forest service officers, Federal agents, and tribal police. But to many here today, they went by different titles: caring husband, loving wife, my son, my daughter, Mom, Dad.

And so to all the families who are here today, whose loved one did not come home at the end of a shift, please know how deeply sorry we are for the loss that you've endured. Know how deeply grateful we are for your loved one's sacrifice.

We hold them up as heroes because that's what they are. It takes a special kind of courage to be a peace officer: to be the one people turn to in their most desperate moments, to be willing to run into a dangerous situation, when everyone else is running the other way. Scripture tells us to love our neighbors as we love ourselves, but only a special few take that commandment so deeply to heart that they are willing to risk their lives so that others—often total strangers—can know peace and security. And that's what peace officers do. And today we honor 131 who made that ultimate sacrifice.

Officer Kevin Gordon [Jordan]* was a member of the police department of Griffin, Georgia. Husband to Tammy. Father to seven children. Army veteran. His daughter Deborah says, "We were his platoon." And Kevin deployed his own training to raise his young platoon, leading them in cadences: How motivated are you?

[*At this point, Griffin, GA, Police Officer Kevin D. Jordan's children, who were seated in the audience, chanted a response.*]

They were motivated. [*Applause*] Highly motivated.

He drilled them with the basics: to study hard and to push yourself and to take care of each other. And everywhere he went, he made friends. In Tammy's words, "He never met a stranger." To help make ends meet, Kevin took a night shift as a security guard at a Waffle House. And one night, some customers got rowdy, and as Kevin was placing one of the troublemakers under arrest, he was shot and killed. He was just 43 years old. One week later, Kevin's son Hezekiah graduated from Griffin High. And there to cheer him on were over a hundred of Kevin's fellow officers. And today, Hezekiah is in the Army, training to be an MP, and wants to be in law enforcement, just like his dad.

Senior Deputy Jessica Hollis started out as an EMT in San Antonio, Texas. She and her husband Ricky applied to the Austin Police Academy together, were accepted together, graduated together, just the second married couple in Austin to do that. Jessica eventually joined the Travis County Sheriff's Office, where she became a senior deputy and member of the prestigious dive team. She was a fierce animal lover. If she drove by a turtle trying to cross a road, she'd slam on the brakes and carry it gently on to the other side. She took her son Mason on special vacations—to the family lake house, New Orleans, on diving trips—just the two of them.

And last September, after heavy rains, Jessica went out to check for civilians trapped in rising water. It was around 2 o'clock in the morning when she radioed for help. Her car was being swept away by the floodwater. Minutes later, she was missing. Dozens of officers came out to join the search, but by the time they found her, it was too late.

More than 1,000 people attended Senior Deputy Hollis's funeral. And there, Travis County Sheriff Greg Hamilton made sure to tell all his officers that he never had the chance to say something to Jessica: "I love each and every one of you. And I'll do anything for you."

Officer Roberto Sanchez's parents brought him to California from Mexico when he was

* White House correction.

just 4 years old. It was his first trip on an airplane, and that airplane is what brought him to America. So he began to collect model airplanes. He took his high school sweetheart, Sonia, on "plane spotting" dates, even worked as a freight carrier at Orange County's John Wayne Airport.

But he always had one big dream: to be a police officer. When he joined the LAPD, friends say it was one of the happiest days of his life. He lived within walking distance of his parents. He volunteered at the school where his niece teaches kindergarten. He married Sonia, his high school sweetheart. And his partner on the force was his best friend. So life was good.

One night, Officer Sanchez was in pursuit of a speeding vehicle when someone intentionally crashed into his patrol car. He was the third Los Angeles police officer killed in a crash in just 2 months.

Your jobs are inherently dangerous. The reminders are too common. Just a few days ago, two police officers were killed in the line of duty in Mississippi. A week before that, an officer was killed in the line of duty in Queens. A few months before that, two of his fellow officers in the NYPD were killed as well.

We cannot erase every darkness or danger from the duty that you've chosen. We can offer you the support you need to be safer. We can make the communities you care about and protect safer as well. You—we can make sure that you have the resources you need to do your job. We can do everything we have to do to combat the poverty that plagues too many communities in which you have to serve.

We can work harder, as a nation, to heal the rifts that still exist in some places between law enforcement and the people you risk your lives to protect. We owe it to all of you who wear the badge with honor. And we owe it to your fellow officers who gave their last full measure of devotion.

Most of all, we can say thank you. We can say we appreciate you and we're grateful for the work that you do each and every day. And we can thank the families who bear the burden alongside you.

On behalf of the American people, I offer the families, friends, and fellow officers of those we've lost my prayers and my deepest thanks. We could not be prouder of them, more grateful for their service. We could not be prouder of you and all who work so hard to keep us safe.

May God bless and keep the fallen. May He comfort the mourning. May He protect the peacemakers. And may He bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:16 a.m. at the National Peace Officers Memorial at the U.S. Capitol. In his remarks, he referred to K. Charles Canterbury, Jr., national president, Fraternal Order of Police; James O. Pasco, Jr., executive director, Steve Young Law Enforcement Legislative Advocacy Center, Fraternal Order of Police; Linda Hennie, president, Fraternal Order of Police Auxiliary; Capt. Dustin R. Lukasiewicz, Capt. Christopher L. Norgren, Sgt. Ward M. Johnson IV, Sgt. Eric M. Seaman, and Cpl. Sara A. Medina, U.S. marines who were killed in a helicopter crash during an earthquake relief operation near Charikot, Nepal, on May 12; Tapendra Rawal and Basanta Titara, Nepalese soldiers who were also killed in the May 12 helicopter crash; Deborah, Hezekiah, Isaiah, Issac, Jaleah, Jesshua, and Ketorah Jordan, children of Officer Jordan; Chantell Mixon, who was charged in connection with the May 31, 2014, murder of Officer Jordan; Francisco and Patricia Sanchez, parents of Los Angeles Police Officer Roberto Sanchez, who was killed in the line of duty on May 3, 2014; Mynor Enrique Varela, who was charged with the murder of Officer Sanchez; Hattiesburg, MS, Police Officers Benjamin Deen and Liquori Tate, who were killed in the line of duty on May 9, 2015; New York City Police Officer Brian R. Moore, who died on May 4 as a result of injuries sustained in the line of duty on May 2; and New York City Police Officers Wenjian Liu and Rafael Ramos, who were killed in the line of duty on December 20, 2014.

Statement on the Death of B.B. King
May 15, 2015

The blues has lost its king, and America has lost a legend. B.B. King was born a sharecropper's son in Mississippi, came of age in Memphis, Tennessee, and became the ambassador who brought his all-American music to his country and the world. No one worked harder than B.B. No one inspired more up-and-coming artists. No one did more to spread the gospel of the blues.

Three years ago, Michelle and I hosted a blues concert at the White House. I hadn't expected that I'd be talked into singing a few lines of "Sweet Home Chicago" with B.B. by the end of the night, but that was the kind of effect his music had and still does. He gets stuck in your head, he gets you moving, he gets you doing the things you probably shouldn't do, but will always be glad you did. B.B. may be gone, but that thrill will be with us forever. And there's going to be one killer blues session in heaven tonight.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Burma
May 15, 2015

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency with respect to Burma that was declared on May 20, 1997, is to continue in effect beyond May 20, 2015. The Government of Burma has made significant progress across a number of important areas, including the release of over 1,300 political prisoners, continued progress toward a nationwide cease-fire, the discharge of hundreds of child soldiers from the military, steps to improve labor standards, and expanding political space for civil society to have a greater voice in shaping issues critical to Burma's future. In addition, Burma has become a signatory of the International Atomic Energy Agency's Additional Protocol and ratified the Biological Weapons Convention, significant steps towards supporting global nonproliferation. Despite these strides, the situation in the country continues to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States.

Concerns persist regarding the ongoing conflict and human rights abuses in the country, particularly in ethnic minority areas and Rakhine State. In addition, Burma's military operates with little oversight from the civilian government and often acts with impunity. For these reasons, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency with respect to Burma.

Despite this action, the United States remains committed to supporting and strengthening Burma's reform efforts and to continue working both with the Burmese government and people to ensure that the democratic transition is sustained and irreversible.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
May 15, 2015.

NOTE: The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

The President's Weekly Address
May 16, 2015

Hi, everybody. Everything we've done over the past 6 years has been in pursuit of one overarching goal: creating opportunity for all. What we've long understood, though, is that some communities have consistently had the odds stacked against them. That's true of rural communities with chronic poverty. It's true of some manufacturing communities that suffered after the plants they depended on closed their doors. It's true of some suburbs and inner cities, where jobs can be hard to find and harder to get to.

And that sense of unfairness and powerlessness has helped to fuel the kind of unrest that we've seen in places like Baltimore and Ferguson and New York. It has many causes, from a basic lack of opportunity to groups feeling unfairly targeted by police, which means there's no single solution. But there are many that could make a difference and could help. And we have to do everything in our power to make this country's promise real for everyone willing to work for it.

That's why last Tuesday, at a summit organized by Catholics and evangelicals, I sat down with a conservative scholar and a poverty expert for a discussion on what it takes to open more doors of opportunity. We know our efforts matter: Since 1967, we've brought poverty down by about 40 percent, thanks in part to programs like Social Security and the earned-income tax credit for working families. And we know that there are folks from all faiths and across the ideological spectrum who care deeply about "the least of these." So I hope this conversation continues, not as a question of whether, but of how, we can work together to grow opportunity. Because it's not words, but deeds that make a difference. And from expanding tax cuts for working parents to raising high school graduation rates, to helping millions of Americans secure health insurance when they didn't have it just a few years ago, our actions are making a difference.

Of course, lack of opportunity is not the only barrier between too many of our young people and the kind of future they deserve. On Monday, I'll travel to Camden, New Jersey, a city that has faced one of the highest violent crime rates in America. I'll highlight some of the innovative things they've done to help police do their jobs more safely and reduce crime in the process. And I'll highlight steps all cities can take to maintain trust between the brave law enforcement officers who put their lives on the line and the communities they have sworn to serve and protect.

Whether we are Democrats, Republicans, or Independents, whether we live in one of our poorest communities, one of our wealthiest, or anywhere in between, we all want our country to be one where hard work pays off and responsibility is rewarded. We want a place where you can make it if you try. That's the promise we make to our young people. That's the promise that makes us exceptional. And it's the promise I'll never stop fighting to keep, for my children and for yours.

Thanks, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 2:40 p.m. on May 15 in the Diplomatic Room at the White House for broadcast on May 16. In the address, the President referred to Arthur C. Brooks, president, American Enterprise Institute; and Robert D. Putnam, Peter and Isabel Malkin Professor of Public Policy, Harvard University. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 15, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on May 16.

Statement on International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia
May 16, 2015

Michelle and I join our fellow Americans and others around the world in commemorating the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia tomorrow, May 17. We take this opportunity to reaffirm that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) rights are human rights, to celebrate the dignity of every person, and to underscore that all people deserve to live free from fear, violence, and discrimination, regardless of who they are or whom they love.

We work toward this goal every day. Here at home, we are working to end bias-motivated violence, combat discrimination in the workplace, and address the specific needs of transgender persons. Overseas, I am proud of the steps that the United States has taken to prioritize the protection and promotion of LGBT rights in our diplomacy and global outreach.

There is much more to do, and this fight for equality will not be won in a day. But we will keep working, at home and abroad, and we will keep fighting, for however long it takes, until we are all able to live free and equal in dignity and rights.

Remarks in Camden, New Jersey
May 18, 2015

Thank you, everybody. Everybody, please have a seat. Have a seat. Well, thank you so much. It is good to be in Camden.

I want to thank your Lieutenant Governor, Kim Guadagno, your Congressman, Donald Norcross, and your mayor, Dana Redd, for being here. Give them all a big round of applause. I want to thank the outstanding facility, our hosts. The Salvation Army is doing great work, and the Ray Kroc Center here seems like just a wonderful, wonderful facility. So we're very proud of them. I want to thank Camden County Police Chief Scott Thomson for his outstanding work. Where's the Chief? There he is.

So I've come here to Camden to do something that might have been unthinkable just a few years ago, and that's to hold you up as a symbol of promise for the Nation. Now, I don't want to overstate it. Obviously, Camden has gone through tough times, and there are still tough times for a lot of folks here in Camden. But just a few years ago, this city was written off as dangerous beyond redemption, a city trapped in a downward spiral. Parents were afraid to let their children play outside. Drug dealers operated in broad daylight. There weren't enough cops to patrol the streets.

So 2 years ago, the police department was overhauled to implement a new model of community policing. They doubled the size of the force, while keeping it unionized. They cut desk jobs in favor of getting more officers out into the streets, not just to walk the beat, but to actually get to know the residents: to set up basketball games, to volunteer in schools, to participate in reading programs, to get to know small businesses in the area.

Now, to be a police officer takes a special kind of courage. And I talked about this on Friday at a memorial for 131 officers who gave their lives to protect communities like this one. It takes a special kind of courage to run towards danger, to be a person that residents turn to when they're most desperate. And when you match courage with compassion, with care and understanding of the community—like we've seen here in Camden—some really outstanding things can begin to happen.

Violent crime in Camden is down 24 percent. Murder is down 47 percent. Open-air drug markets have been cut by 65 percent. The response time for 911 calls is down from 1 hour to just 5 minutes. And when I was in the center, it was 1.3 minutes, right when I was there. And perhaps most significant is that the

police and residents are building trust. Building trust.

Now, nobody is suggesting that the job is done. This is still a work in progress. The police chief would be the first one to say it. So would the mayor. Camden and its people still face some very big challenges. But this city is on to something. You've made real progress in just 2 years. And that's why I'm here today, because I want to focus on the fact that other cities across America can make similar progress.

Everything we've done over the past 6 years, whether it's rescuing the economy or reforming our schools or retooling our job training programs, has been in pursuit of one goal, and that's creating opportunity for all of us, all our kids. But we know that some communities have the odds stacked against them and have had the odds stacked against them for a very long time, in some cases for decades. You've got rural communities that have chronic poverty. You have manufacturing communities that got hit hard when plants closed and people lost jobs. There are not only cities, but also suburbs, where jobs can be tough to find and tougher to get to because of development patterns and lack of transportation options. And folks who do work, they're working harder than ever, but sometimes don't feel like they can get ahead.

And in some communities, that sense of unfairness and powerlessness has contributed to dysfunction in those communities. Communities are like bodies, and if the immunity system is down, they can get sick. And when communities aren't vibrant, where people don't feel a sense of hope and opportunity, then a lot of times that can fuel crime, and that can fuel unrest.

We've seen it in places like Baltimore and Ferguson and New York. And it has many causes, from a basic lack of opportunity to some groups feeling unfairly targeted by their police forces. And that means there's no single solution. There have to be a lot of different solutions and different approaches that we try.

So one of the things that we did to address these issues was to create a Task Force on the future of community policing. And this Task Force was outstanding because it was made up of all the different stakeholders. We had law enforcement. We had community activists. We had young people. They held public meetings across the country. They developed concrete proposals that every community in America can implement to rebuild trust and help law enforcement.

The recommendations were released in March; they were finalized today. They include everything from enhanced officer training to improving the use of body cameras and other technologies to make sure that police departments are being smart about crime and that there's enough data for them to be accountable as well.

And we're trying to support the great work that's happening at the local level where cities are already responding to these recommendations. And before I go further, I just want the members of our Task Force to stand, because they've done some outstanding work, and they deserve to be acknowledged. Thank you.

Now, we've launched a Police Data Initiative that's helping Camden and other innovative cities use data to strengthen their work and hold themselves accountable by sharing it with the public. Departments might track things like incidents of force so that they can identify and handle problems that could otherwise escalate.

Here in Camden, officers deal with some 41 different data systems, which means they have to enter the same information multiple times. So today we've brought a volunteer, elite tech team to help: a group of data scientists and software engineers and tech leaders. They're going to work with the police department here to troubleshoot some of the technical challenges so it's even easier for police departments to do the things they already want to do in helping to track what's going on in communities, and then also helping to make sure that that data is used effectively to identify where there are trouble spots, where there are problems, are there particular officers that may need additional help, additional training. All that can be obtained in a really effective, efficient way.

Today we're also releasing new policies on the military-style equipment that the Federal Government has in the past provided to State and local law enforcement agencies. We've seen how militarized gear can sometimes give people a feeling like there's an occupying force, as opposed to a force that's part of the community that's protecting them and serving them. It can alienate and intimidate local residents and send the wrong message. So we're going to prohibit some equipment made for the battlefield that is not appropriate for local police departments.

There is other equipment that may be needed in certain cases, but only with proper training. So we're going to ensure that departments have what they need, but also that they have the training to use it.

And we're doing these things because we're listening to what law enforcement is telling us. The overwhelming majority of police officers are good and honest and fair. They care deeply about their communities. They put their lives on the line every day to keep them safe. Their loved ones wait and worry until they come through the door at the end of their shift. So we should do everything in our power to make sure that they are safe and help them do the job the best they can.

And what's interesting about what Chief Thomson has done and what's happening here in Camden is these new officers—who I have to confess made me feel old—[*laughter*]—because they all look like they could still be in school. [*Laughter*] The approach that the Chief has taken—in getting them out of their squad cars, into the communities, getting them familiar with the people that they're serving—they're enjoying their jobs more because they feel as if, over time, they can have more of an impact, and they're getting more help from the community because the community has seen them and knows them before there's a crisis, before there's an incident.

So it's not just crisis response. It's not after the fact: There's a crime, there's a dead body, there's a shooting, and now we're going to show up. It's, we're here all the time, and hopefully, we can prevent those shootings from happening in the first place.

But one of the things I also want to focus on is the fact that a lot of the issues that have been raised here, and in places like Baltimore and Ferguson and New York, goes beyond policing. We can't ask the police to contain and control problems that the rest of us aren't willing to face or do anything about.

If we as a society don't do more to expand opportunity to everybody who's willing to work for it, then we'll end up seeing conflicts between law enforcement and residents. If we as a society aren't willing to deal honestly with issue of race, then we can't just expect police departments to solve these problems. If communities are being isolated and segregated, without opportunity and without investment and without jobs, if we politicians are simply ramping up long sentences for nonviolent drug crimes that end up devastating communities, we can't then ask the police to be the ones to solve the problem when there are no able-bodied men in a community or kids are growing up without intact households.

We can't just focus on the problems when there's a disturbance and then cable TV runs it for 2 or 3 or 4 days and then suddenly we forget it—about it again, until the next time. Communities like some poor communities in Camden or my hometown in Chicago, they're part of America too. The kids who grow up here, they're America's children. Just like children everyplace else, they've got hopes, and they've got dreams, and they've got potential. And if we're not investing in them, no matter how good Chief Thomson and the police are doing, these kids are still going to be challenged. So we've all got to step up. We've all got to care about what happens.

Chief Thomson will tell you that his officers read to young children in the communities not just to build positive relationships, but because it's in the interests of the community to make sure these kids can read so they can stay in school and graduate ready for college and careers and become productive members of society. That's in his interest not just as a police chief, but also as a citizen of this country and

somebody who grew up in this area and, knows this area.

And that's why we've partnered with cities and States to get tens of thousands more kids access to quality early childhood education. No matter who they are or where they're born, they should get a good start in life.

That's why we've partnered with cities, including Camden, to create what we call Promise Zones, where all-hands-on-deck efforts to change the odds for communities start happening because we're providing job training and helping to reduce violence and expanding affordable housing.

It's why we're ready to work with folks from both sides of the aisle to reform our criminal justice system. We all want safety, and we all know how pernicious the drug culture can be in undermining communities. But this massive trend toward incarceration even of nonviolent drug offenders and the costs of that trend are crowding out other critical investments that we can make in public safety. If we're spending a whole lot of money on prisons and we don't have computers or books or enough teachers or sports or music programs in our schools, we are being counterproductive. It's not a good strategy.

And so in addition to the work we're doing directly on the criminal justice front, we're also launching something that we call "My Brother's Keeper," an initiative to ensure that all young people, but with a particular focus on young men of color, have a chance to go as far as their dreams will take them. Over the coming weeks, members of my Cabinet will be traveling around the country to highlight communities that are doing great work to improve the lives of their residents.

We know these problems are solvable. We know that we're not lacking for answers, we're just lacking political will. We have to see these problems for what they are: not something that's happening to—in some other city to some other people, but something that's happening in our community, the community of America.

And we know that change is possible because we've seen it in places like this. We've seen it, thanks to people like Officer Virginia Matias. Where is Virginia? There she is right there. So, earlier this year, Vice President Biden and I got to sit with Officer Matias and rank-and-file law enforcement officers from around the country. And Virginia was talking about how when she was growing up in East Camden, crime was so bad she wasn't allowed to go to the store alone. Her mom was once robbed at gunpoint. When she was 17, her uncle was shot and killed in his own store. Instead of turning away from Camden, she decided she wanted to become a cop where she grew up to help the community that she loved. And today, she is a proud member of the Camden County Police Department.

And she's a constant presence in the community, getting to know everybody she passes on her beat, even volunteering in a kindergarten. Officer Matias isn't just helping to keep her community safe, she's also a role model for young people of Camden. And anybody who thinks that things aren't getting better, she says: "I see kids playing outside, riding bikes in the neighborhood, on their porches having a conversation. That's how I measure change."

And that's how we should all measure change. I had a chance to meet with some of the young people here who participated in a little roundtable with the officers, and they're extraordinary young people. And they've got hopes and dreams just like Malia and Sasha, and they're overcoming some bigger barriers than my children ever had to go through or I had to go through. And they're strong, and they're focused.

But in talking to them, some of them—the reason they've been able to make it and do well is because their parents don't let them out outside. Well, you know what, children shouldn't have to be locked indoors in order to be safe. That's not right. Some of them still have concerns about friends of theirs that have taken a wrong path and got involved in the streets and drugs. That's not the environment we need our kids to be growing up in.

I challenge everybody to get to know some of these young people. They're outstanding, and they're going to do great things in their

lives. But the point is, is that they shouldn't have to go through superhuman efforts just to be able to stay in school and go to college and achieve their promise. That should be the norm. That should be standard. And if it isn't, we're not doing something right. We as a society are not doing something right if it isn't.

So, ultimately, that's how we're going to measure change: rising prospects for our kids, rising prospects for the neighborhood. Do our children feel safe on the streets? Do they feel cared for by their community? Do they feel like the police departments care about them? Do they feel as if they—when they work hard they can succeed? Do they feel like the country is making an investment in them? Do they see role models for success? Are there pathways to jobs that they can identify? Do they know that if they put in effort, they can make it? Are they going to be treated fairly regardless of the color of their skin or what their last name is?

It's pretty basic. I travel around the country. The one thing that makes me always so optimistic is our children. And what you realize is everywhere, kids are kids. [*Laughter*] Sometimes, they'll drive you crazy. [*Laughter*] They'll make mistakes. But there's an inherent goodness in them. They want to do the right thing. They just need to be given a chance.

And some of them aren't going to be lucky enough to have the structures at home that they need, in which case, then, we all have to pick up the slack. And if we do, they'll respond. They will. But we've got to feel like that they're our kids. We've got to see our children in them, in their eyes. And we haven't done enough of that. But we can.

This is a moment of great promise; this is a moment of great hope. And if we're seeing such extraordinary improvement in Camden because of the good efforts of a lot of elected officials and an outstanding police chief and some wonderful police officers and a community that's supportive and nonprofit organizations like Salvation Army and others that are doing some great work—if it's working here, it can work anywhere. [*Applause*] It can work anywhere.

On the City Hall of Camden, you got an inscription by Walt Whitman: "In a dream, I saw a city invincible." In a dream, I see a country invincible, if we care enough to make the effort on behalf of every child in this country. Camden is showing that it can be done. I want America to show everybody around the world that it can be done.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:42 p.m. at the Salvation Army Ray and Joan Kroc Corps Community Center.

Statement on the 50th Anniversary of Head Start
May 18, 2015

For millions of families, Head Start has been a lifeline. And for millions of kids, it's been the start of a better life. Over the past half century, 32 million children have benefited from its early learning and development programs. They've recited their numbers and ABCs, raced around playgrounds, and learned thousands of new words. On this 50th anniversary, our challenge is to make Head Start even stronger and to help more children and family benefit from its good work. My administration has increased access to Head Start programs, and we've launched a new partnership with childcare centers to reach tens of thousands more infants and toddlers. Plus, a growing number of States and cities are taking steps to boost access to quality preschool. Now we need Congress to give Head Start the resources to reach more eligible kids. And we need leaders at every level, including in our States and communities, to support Head Start, because early childhood education is one of the smartest investments we can make to keep America strong and competitive in the 21st century.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to the success of Head Start over the past 50 years. Now, let's make sure we keep serving families for the next 50 years and beyond. Because here in America, every child—no matter what they look like, where they come from, or who they are—deserves to get a head start in life.

NOTE: The related proclamation is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks on Signing the Rafael Ramos and Wenjian Liu National Blue Alert Act of 2015
May 19, 2015

Well, as some of you aware, several weeks ago, we lost two of New York's finest, Rafael Ramos and Wenjian Liu. They were serving their community with great honor and dedication and courage. And all of New York grieved, and all of the Nation grieved. It was a reminder of the incredibly difficult and dangerous work that so many of our law enforcement officers are engaged in every single day.

I had a chance to meet the families of Officers Ramos and Liu at the memorial that we did just a few days ago. But it's important for us not only to honor their memory, it's also important for us to make sure that we do everything we can to help ensure the safety of our police officers when they're in the line of duty.

And this legislation, which has been sponsored on a bipartisan basis by people like Senators Cardin and Representatives Reichert and Pascrell, represent, I think, the best of a bipartisan support for law enforcement. What this legislation is going to do is to initiate a Blue Alert System so that when we know there is an active threat against law enforcement, that the alerts are going out at a comprehensive, expeditious way. That prevents the possibility that other officers may be caught by surprise, and it ensures that appropriate steps can be taken as quickly as possible.

So I want to again thank the Members of Congress who have come together to put this legislation in place. Most of all, I want to thank the families who obviously are still grieving from a terrible tragedy, but have worked hard to make sure that it is translated into something concrete.

And we're very proud of them. I'm particularly proud of the children here, these young men who, I think, are obviously grief stricken, but we know they're going to do a great job looking after their mom moving forward.

So with that, what I'd like to do is sign the legislation.

[*At this point, the President signed the bill.*]

Done. Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:07 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Jaden and Justin Ramos, sons, and Maritza Ramos, wife, of Rafael L. Ramos, a New York City Police officer who was killed in the line of duty on December 20, 2014. S. 665, approved May 19, was assigned Public Law No. 114–12.

Statement on Congressional Action on Trade Enforcement Legislation
May 19, 2015

I have made rigorous trade enforcement a central pillar of U.S. trade policy, and we have moved aggressively to protect American workers and to improve labor laws and working conditions with trading partners across the globe.

The nature of global trade continues to evolve, and in addition to setting high standards through new trade agreements, the administration supports new tools that would strengthen the administration's ability to level

the playing field for U.S. workers, businesses, and farmers.

I am pleased that Chairman Hatch, Senator Wyden, and Chairman Ryan have agreed to swift consideration of the bipartisan Trade Facilitation and Trade Enforcement Act by the end of June. Many of these new tools, such as Super 301—elements of the ENFORCE Act and the Level the Playing Field Act—and constructive tools to address unfair currency practices, would strengthen our ability to both facilitate trade and improve enforcement of the rules. We must also repeal the consumptive demand exception for child and forced labor.

I look forward to working with both Chambers to improve certain provisions and to ensure swift, strong, and effective enforcement. These critical enforcement tools are complementary to new trade agreements. This legislation should be considered and reach my desk as quickly as possible.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Stabilization of Iraq
May 19, 2015

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency with respect to the stabilization of Iraq that was declared in Executive Order 13303 of May 22, 2003, is to continue in effect beyond May 22, 2015.

Obstacles to the orderly reconstruction of Iraq, the restoration and maintenance of peace and security in the country, and the development of political, administrative, and economic institutions in Iraq continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. Accordingly, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency with respect to the stabilization of Iraq.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
May 19, 2015.

NOTE: The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Commencement Address at the United States Coast Guard Academy in New London, Connecticut
May 20, 2015

The President. Thank you very much. Everybody, please have a seat. Class of 2015: Ahoy!

Audience members. Ahoy! [*Laughter*]

The President. There are now fewer days to go until the class of 2015 graduates than—never mind. [*Laughter*] There are now zero days until the class of 2015 graduates.

Thank you, Admiral Zukunft, for your kind introduction and for your leadership of our coastguardsmen on all seven continents; Governor Malloy, Secretary Johnson, Ambassador, distinguished guests, faculty and staff, families and friends.

And Admiral Stosz, as you prepare to conclude your time as Superintendent, thank you for your outstanding stewardship of this Academy. You made history as the first woman ever to lead one of our Nation's service academies.

And I know you'll keep making history, because I was proud to nominate you for your third star and as the Coast Guard's next Deputy Commandant for Mission Support.

It is wonderful to be with all of you here today on this beautiful day. Michelle sends her greetings as well. She is the proud sponsor of the Coast Guard cutter *Stratton,* which is tough to beat. But as Admiral Zukunft pointed out, both the Coast Guard and I were born on the same day. So I want you all to know, every birthday from now on, I will be thinking about the Coast Guard. [*Laughter*]

Now, the Coast Guard may be the smallest of our services, but I have to say, you may also be the loudest. [*Laughter*] Whenever I visit our military bases, there are always lots of soldiers and sailors and airmen and marines. They make a lot of noise. But wherever I am, across the country or around the world, including Afghanistan—nowhere near an ocean—the most determined cheer from the crowd comes from our proud coastguardsmen, because usually, there might only be one or two of them. [*Laughter*]

And as Paul mentioned, in my State of the Union Address this year, I mentioned how I've seen America at its best when commissioning our new officers, including here in New London. And it's true, some folks across the country didn't quite get the reference. One person tweeted that they were pretty sure I just made this up. And then there was one person in town who asked, "Did Obama name drop New London?" So let me do it again. It is a great honor to be back in New London, at the United States Coast Guard Academy, to salute the newest ensigns of America's oldest continuous maritime service.

Cadets, this is a day to celebrate all that you've achieved over these past 4 years. You have excelled at one of the most selective and rigorous academic institutions in America. You've held yourselves to a high code of conduct, proven yourself worthy to be called commissioned officers of the United States Coast Guard.

You pushed yourselves physically, from Swab Summer to beating your officers at basketball and softball and football. [*Laughter*] You braced up, squared your meals, spent Friday nights waxing the floors, maybe a little "Rodeo Buffing." [*Laughter*] I saw the video. That looks dangerous, by the way. [*Laughter*] You made your mark, and you will be remembered: in Chase Hall, in this stadium, and at Hanafin's and Bulkeley House. Which reminds me, in keeping with longstanding tradition, I hereby absolve all cadets serving restrictions for minor offenses. [*Laughter*] Minor offenses.

You came together as one team. We are joined today by Commander Merle Smith, the first African American graduate of this Academy, class of 1966, a decorated Vietnam veteran. His legacy endures in all of you, because the graduating class of 2015 is the most diverse in Academy history. And you took care of each other, like family. Today we honor the memory of your classmate from the Republic of Georgia, Soso, along with Beso. Their spirits will live on in the partnerships you forge with coast guards all over the world.

Today you take your rightful place in the Long Blue Line. For Marina Stevens and her family, it is a very long line. Where is Marina? Just wave at me real quick. There she is right there. Marina's dad is Coast Guard civilian. Her mom Janet, an Academy graduate, was a Coast Guard captain and will pin on Marina's shoulder boards today. Marina's grandfather was a coastguardsman. Her great-grandfather joined the U.S. Lighthouse Service in 1918. That's four generations, spanning nearly the entire life of the modern Coast Guard. No wonder she's named Marina. [*Laughter*] It's in her blood.

And, cadets, I know that none of you reached this day alone. So join me in giving a huge round of applause to your mentors and your incredible parents and your family members, so many of them, themselves, veterans as well. Please give them a big round of applause.

Class of 2015, I'm here as your Commander in Chief, on behalf of the American people, to say thanks to each of you. Thanks for choosing to serve, for stepping up, for giving up the comforts of civilian life, for putting on that uniform. Thank you for the service you are about to render, the life of purpose that you've

embraced, the risks that you've accepted, and the sacrifices that you will make.

But I'm not here to just sing your praises. I want to speak to you about what comes next. Soon, you'll fan out across the Coast Guard, and some of you will go to sectors and shore command. Some of you will start your duty aboard cutters. Some of you will start flight training. America needs you. And we need the Coast Guard more than ever.

We need you to safeguard our ports against all threats, including terrorism. We need you to respond in times of disaster or distress and lead your rescue teams as they jump out of perfectly good helicopters. We need you in the Caribbean and Central America, interdicting drugs before they reach our streets and damage our kids. We need you in the Middle East, in the Gulf, alongside our Navy; in places like West Africa, where you helped to keep the ports open so that the world could fight a deadly disease. We need you in the Asia-Pacific, to help our partners train their own coast guards to uphold maritime security and freedom of navigation in waters vital to our global economy.

These are all demanding missions. The pace of operations is intense. And these are tight fiscal times for all our services, including the Coast Guard. But we are going to keep working to give you the boats and the cutters and the aircraft that you need to complete the missions we ask of you.

We're moving ahead with new Fast Response Cutters, new Offshore Patrol Cutters. We're on track to have a full fleet of new National Security Cutters, the most advanced in history. And I've made it clear that I will not accept a budget that continues these draconian budget cuts called sequestration, because our Nation and our military and our Coast Guard deserve better.

And this brings me to the challenge I want to focus on today, one where our coastguardsmen are already on the front lines and that, perhaps more than any other, will shape your entire careers, and that's the urgent need to combat and adapt to climate change.

As a nation, we face many challenges, including the grave threat of terrorism. And as Americans, we will always do everything in our power to protect our country. Yet even as we meet threats like terrorism, we cannot—and we must not—ignore a peril that can affect generations.

Now, I know there are still some folks back in Washington who refuse to admit that climate change is real. And on a day like today, it's hard to get too worried about it. There are folks who will equivocate. They'll say, "You know, I'm not a scientist." Well, I'm not either. [*Laughter*] But the best scientists in the world know that climate change is happening. Our analysts in the intelligence community know climate change is happening. Our military leaders—generals and admirals, Active Duty and retired—know it's happening. Our homeland security professionals know it is happening. And our Coast Guard knows it's happening.

The science is indisputable. The fossil fuels we burn release carbon dioxide, which traps heat. And the levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere are now higher than they have been in 800,000 years. The planet is getting warmer. Fourteen of the 15 hottest years on record have been in the past 15 years. Last year was the planet's warmest year ever recorded.

Our scientists at NASA just reported that some of the sea ice around Antarctica is breaking up even faster than expected. The world's glaciers are melting, pouring new water into the ocean. Over the past century, the world sea level rose by about 8 inches. Now, that was in the last century; by the end of this century, it's projected to rise another 1 to 4 feet.

Cadets, the threat of a changing climate cuts to the very core of your service. You've been drawn to water, like the poet who wrote, "the heart of the great ocean sends a thrilling pulse through me." You know the beauty of the sea, but you also know its unforgiving power.

Here at the Academy, climate change—understanding the science and the consequences—is part of the curriculum, and rightly so, because it will affect everything that you do in your careers. Some of you have already served in Alaska and aboard icebreakers, and you know the effects. As America's Maritime

Guardian, you've pledged to remain always ready—Semper Paratus—ready for all threats. And climate change is one of those most severe threats.

And this is not just a problem for countries on the coasts or for certain regions of the world. Climate change will impact every country on the planet. No nation is immune. So I'm here today to say that climate change constitutes a serious threat to global security, an immediate risk to our national security. And make no mistake, it will impact how our military defends our country. And so we need to act, and we need to act now.

After all, isn't that the true hallmark of leadership? When you're on deck, standing your watch, you stay vigilant. You plan for every contingency. And if you see storm clouds gathering, or dangerous shoals ahead, you don't sit back and do nothing. You take action, to protect your ship, to keep your crew safe. Anything less is negligence. It is a dereliction of duty. And so too with climate change. Denying it or refusing to deal with it endangers our national security. It undermines the readiness of our forces.

It's been said of life on the sea, "The pessimist complains about the wind, the optimist expects it to change; the realist adjusts the sails." Cadets, like you, I reject pessimism. We know what we as Americans can achieve when we set ourselves to great endeavors. We are, by nature, optimists, but we're not blind optimists. We know that wishful thinking in the face of all evidence to the contrary would set us on a course for disaster. If we are to meet this threat of climate change, we must be realists. We have to readjust the sails.

And that's why confronting climate change is now a key pillar of American global leadership. When I meet with leaders around the world, it's often at the top of our agenda, a core element of our diplomacy. And you are part of the first generation of officers to begin your service in a world where the effects of climate change are so clearly upon us. It will shape how every one of our services plan, operate, train, equip, and protect their infrastructure, their capabilities, today and for the long term. So let me be specific on how your generation will have to lead the way: to both prepare ourselves and how to prevent the worst effects in the future.

Around the world, climate change increases the risk of instability and conflict. Rising seas are already swallowing low-lying lands, from Bangladesh to Pacific islands, forcing people from their homes. Caribbean islands and Central American coasts are vulnerable as well. Globally, we could see a rise in climate change refugees. And I guarantee you, the Coast Guard will have to respond. Elsewhere, more intense droughts will exacerbate shortages of water and food, increase competition for resources, and create the potential for mass migrations and new tensions. All of which is why the Pentagon calls climate change a "threat multiplier."

Understand, climate change did not cause the conflicts we see around the world. Yet what we also know is that severe drought helped to create the instability in Nigeria that was exploited by the terrorist group Boko Haram. It's now believed that drought and crop failures and high food prices helped fuel the early unrest in Syria, which descended into civil war in the heart of the Middle East. So, increasingly, our military and our combatant commands, our services—including the Coast Guard—will need to factor climate change into plans and operations, because you need to be ready.

Around the world, climate change will mean more extreme storms. No single weather event can be blamed solely on climate change. But Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines gave us a possible glimpse of things to come: one of the worst cyclones ever recorded, thousands killed, many more displaced, billions of dollars in damage, and a massive international relief effort that included the United States military and its Coast Guard. So more extreme storms will mean more humanitarian missions to deliver lifesaving help. Our forces will have to be ready.

As Admiral Zukunft already mentioned, climate change means Arctic sea ice is vanishing faster than ever. By the middle of this century, Arctic summers could be essentially ice free.

We're witnessing the birth of a new ocean: new sea lanes, more shipping, more exploration, more competition for the vast natural resources below.

In Alaska, we have more than 1,000 miles of Arctic coastline. The United States is an Arctic nation, and we have a great interest in making sure that the region is peaceful, that its indigenous people and environment are protected, and that its resources are managed responsibly in partnership with other nations. And that means all of you are going to have to step up, because few know the Arctic better than the U.S. Coast Guard. You've operated there across nearly 150 years. And as the Arctic opens, the role that the Coast Guard plays will only grow. I believe that our interests in the Arctic demand that we continue to invest in an enduring Coast Guard icebreaking capacity.

I was proud to nominate your last Commandant, Admiral Papp, as our Special Representatives for the Arctic. And as the U.S. chairs the Arctic Council this year, I'm committed to advancing our interests in this critical region because we have to be ready in the Arctic as well.

Climate change, and especially rising seas, is a threat to our homeland security, our economic structure—infrastructure, the safety and health of the American people. Already, today, in Miami and Charleston, streets now flood at high tide. Along our coasts, thousands of miles of highways and roads, railways, energy facilities are all vulnerable. It's estimated that a further increase in sea level of just one foot by the end of this century could cost our Nation $200 billion.

In New York Harbor, the sea level is already a foot higher than a century ago, which was one of the reasons Superstorm Sandy put so much of lower Manhattan underwater. During Sandy, the Coast Guard mounted a heroic response, along with our National Guard and Reserve. But rising seas and stronger storms will mean more disaster response missions. And we need the Coast Guard to be ready, because you are America's maritime first responder.

Climate change poses a threat to the readiness of our forces. Many of our military installations are on the coast, including, of course, our Coast Guard stations. Around Norfolk, high tides and storms increasingly flood parts of our Navy base and an airbase. In Alaska, thawing permafrost is damaging military facilities. Out West, deeper droughts and longer wildfires could threaten training areas our troops depend on.

So politicians who say they care about military readiness ought to care about this as well. Just as we're helping American communities prepare to deal with the impacts of climate change, we have to help our bases and ports as well. Not just with stronger seawalls and natural barriers, but with smarter, more resilient infrastructure, because when the seas rise and storms come, we all have to be ready.

Now, everything I've discussed with you so far is about preparing for the impacts of climate change. But we need to be honest: Such preparation and adaptation alone will not be enough. As men and women in uniform, you know that it can be just as important, if not more important, to prevent threats before they can cause catastrophic harm. And the only way—the only way—the world is going to prevent the worst effects of climate change is to slow down the warming of the planet.

Some warming is now inevitable. But there comes a point when the worst effects will be irreversible. And time is running out. And we all know what needs to happen. It's no secret. The world has to finally start reducing its carbon emissions now. And that's why I've committed the United States to leading the world on this challenge.

Over the past 6 years, we've done more than ever to reduce harmful emissions: unprecedented investments to cut energy waste in our homes and buildings, standards to double the fuel efficiency of our vehicles. We're using more clean energy than ever before: more solar, more wind. It's all helped us reduce our carbon emissions more than any other advanced nation. And today, we can be proud that our carbon pollution is near its lowest levels in almost two decades. But we've got to do more.

So going forward, I've committed to doubling the pace at which we cut carbon pollution. And that means we all have to step up. And it will not be easy. It will require sacrifice, and the politics will be tough. But there is no other way. We have to make our homes and buildings more efficient. We have to invest in more energy research and renewable technologies. We have to move ahead with standards to cut the amount of carbon pollution in our power plants. And working with other nations, we have to achieve a strong global agreement this year to start reducing the total global emission, because every nation must do its part. Every nation.

So this will be tough. But as so often is the case, our men and women in uniform show us the way. They're used to sacrifice and they are used to doing hard stuff. Class of 2015, you've built new equipment that uses less energy. You've designed new vessels with fewer harmful emissions. Stephen Horvath, selected as a Fulbright Scholar, will research new technologies for renewable energies. The Coast Guard is building more fuel-efficient cutters. So you're already leading. And, cadets, as you go forward, I challenge you to keep imagining and building the new future we need and make your class motto your life's work: "To go where few dare." This is a place where we need you.

Across our military, our bases and ports are using more solar and wind, which helps save money that we can use to improve readiness. The Army is pursuing new, lighter, more fuel-efficient vehicles. The Air Force F–22 broke the sound barrier using biofuels. And the Navy runs an entire carrier strike group, the Green Fleet, with biofuels. Our Marines have deployed to Afghanistan with portable solar panels, lightening their load and reducing dangerous resupply missions. So fighting climate change and using energy wisely also makes our forces more nimble and more ready. And that's something that should unite us as Americans. This cannot be subject to the usual politics and the usual rhetoric. When storms gather, we get ready.

And I want to leave you with a story that captures the persistence and the patriotism that this work requires, because this is a nation made up of folks who know how to do hard things. Down in the front row is Dr. Olivia Hooker. In 1921, in Tulsa, Oklahoma, when she was just 6 years old, her African American community was attacked by White mobs. It was a horrific racial incident. And hundreds of innocent African Americans were killed. The mobs destroyed her father's clothing store. They looted her house. They even burned the little clothes for her doll.

And Olivia could have given in to bitterness. She could have been pessimistic about her country. Instead, she made it better. So, in World War II, she enlisted as a SPAR, becoming the first African American woman in the Coast Guard. As a yeoman in Boston, she served with distinction. By the time the war was won, she was discharged, she was a petty officer second class.

With the GI bill, Olivia earned her master's, then her doctorate. She has been a professor and mentor to her students, a passionate advocate for Americans with disabilities, a psychologist counseling young children, a caregiver at the height of the AIDS epidemic, a tireless voice for justice and equality. And a few months ago, Olivia turned a hundred years old.

So, Olivia, you're going to have to tell us you're secret. She's still as sharp as they come, and as fearless. In Yonkers, New York, she even still volunteers as a member of the Coast Guard Auxiliary and was determined to be here with us today. So, Dr. Hooker, thank you. You're an inspiration. Hundred years old. So Dr. Hooker has led a remarkable life. But this is what she says: "It's not about you or me. It's about what we can give to this world."

Cadets, you're at the start of your careers. And we cannot know, each of us, how many days we will walk this Earth. We can't guarantee we're all going to live to a hundred. But what we can do is live each day to its fullest. What we can do is look squarely at what will make the biggest difference for future generations and be willing to tackle those challenges.

And as you embark on your life of service, as you man your stations and head to the seas and take to the skies, should the sea begin to surge

and the waves swell and the wind blows hard against your face, I want you to think back to this moment, to feel what you feel in your hearts today. And if you remember all that you've learned here at the Thames, how you came here and came together, out of many one, to achieve as a team what you could never do alone; if you resolve to stay worthy of traditions that endure—honor, respect, devotion to duty; if you heed the wisdom and humility of a petty officer second class from Oklahoma, to think not of yourself, but what you can give to this world, then I'm confident that you will truly go where few dare. And you will rise to meet the challenges that not only face our country, but face our planet. And your legacy will be a nation that is stronger and safer for generations to come.

So, class of 2015, thank you for your service. Congratulations. God bless you. God bless all our coastguardsmen. God bless our United States of America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:42 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard Adm. Paul F. Zukunft, USCG; Georgia's Ambassador to the U.S. Archil Gegeshidze; Sandra Stosz, Superintendent, U.S. Coast Guard Academy; U.S. Coast Guard Academy cadets Bersarian "Beso" Gorjoladze and Soso Makaridze, who were killed in a car crash in Hopewell, NJ, on March 7; and Jim Stevens, father, and Mike Emerson, grandfather, of U.S. Coast Guard Academy graduate Marina Stevens.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Beji Caid Essebsi of Tunisia
May 21, 2015

President Obama. It is a great pleasure to welcome back President Caid Essebsi to the Oval Office. We had the opportunity to meet early in the aftermath of the political transition that had begun in Tunisia. And it was very gratifying to hear about the excellent progress that's been made in Tunisia's transformation into an inclusive and functioning democracy.

It is important to recognize that the place where the Arab Spring began is the place where we have seen the most extraordinary progress in allowing all parties and all parts of the population, including women and minorities, participate fully in the civic and political life of the nation. And it bodes well for Tunisia's future and for the future of its children. And I emphasized to the President that the United States is fully committed to working with Tunisia so that it can continue to build on this success.

The friendship between the United States and Tunisia dates back centuries. But at this critical time in world history, we think it's very important for us to continue to expand the economic assistance that we're providing so that ordinary Tunisians can feel the concrete benefits of a change to a more open and competitive economy. I committed to continuing to work to expand the education scholarship and exchange programs that have already been established between our two countries so that young Tunisians can continue to access the skills they need to get good jobs and compete in the international economy.

We discussed the importance of security and the recognition that, given the instability in the region, it is important for us to continue to partner effectively in counterterrorism efforts, but also in our efforts to stabilize Libya and bring the parties together so that we don't have a failed state and a power vacuum that ends up infecting the situation in Tunisia as well.

And in recognition of the importance that we place on the security and diplomatic relationship with Tunisia, I indicated to the President my intention to designate Tunisia as a major non-NATO ally of the United States. And I committed that as Tunisia continues to embark on important structural reforms to the economy that we will not only provide short-term aid, but also try to provide the kind of bridge and support that's necessary to complete those reforms and make sure that they're effective and benefiting the people of Tunisia.

So overall, this was an excellent discussion, but it was reflective of what had been ongoing consultations and a lot of work by our diplomatic and military and economic and intelligence teams during the course of this incredible transformation of Tunisia. And I want the President and the people of Tunisia to know that the United States believes in Tunisia, is invested in its success, and will work as a steady partner for years to come.

President Caid Essebsi. I have little to add to what Mr. President have kindly said. In this meeting, we have discussed all issues related to Tunisia-U.S. cooperation, in all fields. And I felt that there is the opportunity to continue this support to ensure the success of the democratic choice that Tunisia has opted for.

However important the milestone that Tunisia has reached in the democratic process, we are still in midway. The—we have a long way ahead of us. To reach the conclusion of the democratic system and the final consolidation of this system, still—there is still a lot to be done.

The democratic process is always fragile, vulnerable, and threatened by chaos, by parties that do not believe in democracy, that do not espouse democratic policies and discourse, but also by our regional environment, which could represent a threat to the democratic process.

Fortunately, the Tunisian people are very much aware about the importance of the gains it has acquired and about protecting these gains and continuing to work to ensure success.

We have a process of reforms that is underway. We have achieved a milestone in implementing these reforms. In—we are almost midway. We are committed to these reforms, and within this year, we are going to finalize all the reforms that we need to implement. The objective is to reform the economy, but also to send a potent message to the world, to investors, and to tell them that Tunisia is a favorable site for investment and for growth.

Mr. President Obama has underscored during our discussion his faith in Tunisia and his belief in Tunisia's chances for success. We, too, in Tunisia have trust in the friendship of the U.S. and with the longstanding history and the friendship between the two countries. We are integrating a new phase, a new chapter in our bilateral relations, and we need the support of the U.S., and maybe, the U.S. needs Tunisia too now. *Merci.*

President Obama. Merci beaucoup. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:40 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. President Caid Essebsi spoke in Arabic, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks Prior to a Cabinet Meeting
May 21, 2015

Well, today I have the opportunity to welcome two of the newest members of our Cabinet who haven't had a chance to be at a Cabinet meeting before: our new Secretary of Defense, Ash Carter, and our new Attorney General, Loretta Lynch. And we want to give them a big round of applause.

Each of the men and women around this table have a very simple mission, although it's hard to execute, and that is, how do we make sure that we are continually expanding opportunity, prosperity, and security for the American people? The good news is, about halfway through 2015, we've already seen some significant progress. The unemployment rate is now at its lowest in almost 7 years. Our businesses created 3 million jobs over the past 12 months, nearly the fastest pace in over a decade. On the health care front, the uninsured rate has now fallen by the largest amount in four decades, even as health care inflation continues to be lower than it has been in a very long time.

So our work is paying off. But we've got to build on that progress. And our overarching goal remains the same, which is, how do we make sure everybody in this country gets opportunity? That means that we're going to keep fighting to make sure that community colleges

are as free and as universal as high school. It means we're going to go after issues of poverty and inequality, both urban and rural. It means that we're going to continue to expand on our job training agenda and our apprenticeship agenda so that people of all ages have the skills that they need to succeed in this economy.

It means we're going to continue to go after ISIL, get a strong deal that prevents Iran from getting a nuclear weapon. And as part of our agenda for middle class economics, it means that we're going to continue to pursue strong trade agreements that benefit American workers and American businesses.

And I want to thank the bipartisan group of Senators who took a big step forward this morning on the trade agenda that is consistent with strong labor standards, strong environmental standards, and is going to open up access to markets that too often are closed even as these other countries are selling goods here in the United States. It's an agenda that's good for U.S. businesses, but most importantly, good for American workers.

So we've got a lot to do over the next year and a half. We're going to run through the tape. [*Laughter*] And I'm going to be hearing from everybody around this table in terms of how we are going to make sure that all of our agencies are working on all cylinders to accomplish these goals. All right?

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:21 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

Remarks at Adas Israel Congregation
May 22, 2015

The President. Thank you so much. Thank you, everybody. Thank you. Well, good morning, everybody!

Audience members. Good morning!

The President. A slightly early *Shabbat shalom*. [*Laughter*] I want to thank Rabbi Steinlauf for the very kind introduction. And to all the members of the congregation, thank you so much for such an extraordinary and warm welcome.

I want to thank a couple of outstanding Members of Congress who are here. Senators Michael Bennet—where did Michael Bennet go? There he is. And Representative Sandy Levin, who is here. I want to thank our Special Envoy To Combat Anti-Semitism, Ira Forman, for his important work. There he is. But as I said, most of all I want to thank the entire congregation of Adas Israel for having me here today.

Earlier this week, I was actually interviewed by one of your members, Jeff Goldberg. And Jeff reminded me that he once called me "the first Jewish President." [*Laughter*] Now, since some people still seem to be wondering about my faith—[*laughter*]—I should make clear, this was an honorary title. [*Laughter*] But I was flattered.

And as an honorary member of the tribe—[*laughter*]—not to mention somebody who's hosted seven White House Seders and been advised by two Jewish Chiefs of Staff, I can also proudly say that I'm getting a little bit of the hang of the lingo. [*Laughter*] But I will not use any of the Yiddish-isms that Rahm Emanuel taught me because—[*laughter*]—I want to be invited back. [*Laughter*] Let's just say he had some creative new synonyms for *shalom*. [*Laughter*]

Now, I wanted to come here to celebrate Jewish American Heritage Month because this congregation, like so many around the country, helps us to tell the American story. And back in 1876, when President Grant helped dedicate Adas Israel, he became the first sitting President in history to attend a synagogue service. And at the time, it was an extraordinarily symbolic gesture, not just for America, but for the world.

And think about the landscape of Jewish history. Tomorrow night the holiday of Shavuot marks the moment that Moses received the Torah at Mount Sinai, the first link in a chain

of tradition that stretches back thousands of years and a foundation stone for our civilization. Yet, for most of those years, Jews were persecuted, not embraced, by those in power. Many of your ancestors came here fleeing that persecution.

The United States could have been merely another destination in that ongoing diaspora. But those who came here found that America was more than just a country, America was an idea. America stood for something. As George Washington wrote to the Jews of Newport, Rhode Island: The United States "gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance."

It's important for us to acknowledge that too often in our history, we fell short of those lofty ideals: in the legal subjugation of African Americans through slavery and Jim Crow, the treatment of Native Americans. And far too often, American Jews faced the scourge of anti-Semitism here at home. But our founding documents gave us a north star, our Bill of Rights; our system of government gave us a capacity for change. And where other nations actively and legally might persecute or discriminate against those of different faiths, this Nation was called upon to see all of us as equal before the eyes of the law. When other countries treated their own citizens as "wretched refuse," we lifted up our lamp beside the golden door and welcomed them in. Our country is immeasurably stronger because we did.

From Einstein to Brandeis, from Jonas Salk to Betty Friedan, American Jews have made contributions to this country that have shaped it in every aspect. And as a community, American Jews have helped make our Union more perfect. The story of Exodus inspired oppressed peoples around the world in their own struggles for civil rights. From the founding members of the NAACP to a freedom summer in Mississippi, from women's rights to gay rights to workers' rights, Jews took the heart of Biblical edict that we must not oppress a stranger, having been strangers once ourselves.

Earlier this year, when we marked the 50th anniversary of the march in Selma, we remembered the iconic images of Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel marching with Dr. King, praying with his feet. And to some, it must have seemed strange that a rabbi from Warsaw would take such great risks to stand with a Baptist preacher from Atlanta. But Heschel explained that their cause was one and the same. In his essay, "No Religion Is an Island," he wrote, "We must choose between interfaith and internihilism." Between a shared hope that says together we can shape a brighter future or a shared cynicism that says our world is simply beyond repair.

So the heritage we celebrate this month is a testament to the power of hope. Me standing here before you, all of you in this incredible congregation, is a testament to the power of hope. It's a rebuke to cynicism. It's a rebuke to nihilism. And it inspires us to have faith that our future, like our past, will be shaped by the values that we share. At home, those values compel us to work to keep alive the American Dream of opportunity for all. It means that we care about issues that affect all children, not just our own; that we're prepared to invest in early childhood education; that we are concerned about making college affordable; that we want to create communities where if you're willing to work hard, you can get ahead the way so many who fled and arrived on these shores were able to get ahead. Around the world, those values compel us to redouble our efforts to protect our planet and to protect the human rights of all who share this planet.

It's particularly important to remember now, given the tumult that is taking place in so many corners of the globe, in one of the world's most dangerous neighborhoods, those shared values compel us to reaffirm that our enduring friendship with the people of Israel and our unbreakable bonds with the State of Israel—that those bonds, that friendship cannot be broken. Those values compel us to say that our commitment to Israel's security—and my commitment to Israel's security—is and always will be unshakeable.

And I've said this before: It would be a moral failing on the part of the U.S. Government and the American people, it would be a moral failing on my part, if we did not stand up firmly, steadfastly not just on behalf of Israel's right

to exist, but its right to thrive and prosper. Because it would ignore the history that brought the State of Israel about. It would ignore the struggle that's taken place through millennia to try to affirm the kinds of values that say everybody has a place, everybody has rights, everybody is a child of God.

As many of you know, I've visited the houses hit by rocket fire in Sderot. I've been to Yad Vashem and made that solemn vow: "Never forget. Never again." When someone threatens Israel's citizens or its very right to exist, Israelis necessarily take that seriously, and so do I. Today, the military and intelligence cooperation between our two countries is stronger than ever. Our support of the Iron Dome's rocket system has saved Israeli lives. And I can say that no U.S. President, no administration has done more to ensure that Israel can protect itself than this one.

As part of that commitment, there's something else that the United States and Israel agrees on: Iran must not, under any circumstances, be allowed to get a nuclear weapon. Now, there's a debate about how to achieve that, and that's a healthy debate. And I'm not going to use my remaining time to go too deep into policy—although, for those of you who are interested—[*laughter*]—we have a lot of material out there. [*Laughter*] But I do want everybody to just remember a few key things.

The deal that we already reached with Iran has already halted or rolled back parts of Iran's nuclear program. Now we're seeking a comprehensive solution. I will not accept a bad deal. As I pointed out in my most recent article with Jeff Goldberg, this deal will have my name on it, so nobody has a bigger personal stake in making sure that it delivers on its promise. I want a good deal.

I'm interested in a deal that blocks every single one of Iran's pathways to a nuclear weapon—every single path. A deal that imposes unprecedented inspections on all elements of Iran's nuclear program so that they can't cheat and if they try to cheat, we will immediately know about it and sanctions snap back on. A deal that endures beyond a decade; that addresses this challenge for the long term. In other words, a deal that makes the world and the region—including Israel—more secure. That's how I define a good deal.

Now, I can't stand here today and guarantee an agreement will be reached. We're hopeful. We're working hard. But nothing is agreed until everything is agreed. And I've made clear that when it comes to preventing Iran from get getting a nuclear weapon, all options are and will remain on the table.

Moreover, even if we do get a good deal, there remains the broader issue of Iran's support for terrorism and regional destabilization and ugly threats against Israel. And that's why our strategic partnership with Israel will remain, no matter what happens in the days and years ahead. And that's why the people of Israel must always know: America has its back, and America will always have its back.

Now, that does not mean that there will not be, or should not be, periodic disagreements between our two governments. There will be disagreements on tactics when it comes to how to prevent Iran from getting a nuclear weapon, and that is entirely appropriate and should be fully aired. Because the stakes are sufficiently high that anything that's proposed has to be subjected to scrutiny, and I welcome that scrutiny.

But there are also going to be some disagreements rooted in shared history that go beyond tactics, that are rooted in how we might remain true to our shared values. I came to know Israel as a young man through these incredible images of kibbutzim and Moshe Dayan and Golda Meir and Israel overcoming incredible odds in the '67 war. The notion of pioneers who set out not only to safeguard a nation, but to remake the world; not only to make the desert bloom, but to allow their values to flourish, to ensure that the best of Judaism would thrive. And those values in many ways came to be my own values. They believed the story of their people gave them a unique perspective among the nations of the world, a unique moral authority and responsibility that comes from having once been a stranger yourself.

And to a young man like me, grappling with his own identity, recognizing the scars of race here in this Nation, inspired by the civil rights struggle, the idea that you could be grounded in your history, as Israel was, but not be trapped by it, to be able to repair the world, that idea was liberating. The example of Israel and its values was inspiring.

So when I hear some people say that disagreements over policy belie a general lack of support of Israel, I must object, and I object forcefully. For us to paper over difficult questions, particularly about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict or about settlement policy, that's not a true measure of friendship.

Before I came out here, the Rabbi showed me the room that's been built to promote scholarship and dialogue and to be able to find how we make our shared values live. And the reason you have that room is because applying those values to our lives is often hard and involves difficult choices. That's why we study. That's why it's not just a formula. And that's what we have to do as nations as well as individuals. We have to grapple and struggle with how do we apply the values that we care about to this very challenging and dangerous world.

And it is precisely because I care so deeply about the State of Israel—it's precisely because, yes, I have high expectations for Israel the same way I have high expectations for the United States of America—that I feel a responsibility to speak out honestly about what I think will lead to long-term security and to the preservation of a true democracy in the Jewish homeland. And I believe that's two states for two peoples, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. Just as Israelis built a state in their homeland, Palestinians have a right to be a free people on their land as well.

Now, I want to emphasize, that's not easy. [*Laughter*] The Palestinians are not the easiest of partners. [*Laughter*] The neighborhood is dangerous. And we cannot expect Israel to take existential risks with their security, so that any deal that takes place has to take into account the genuine dangers of terrorism and hostility.

But it is worthwhile for us to keep up the prospect, the possibility of bridging divides and being just and looking squarely at what's possible, but also necessary in order for Israel to be the type of nation that it was intended to be in its earliest founding.

And that same sense of shared values also compel me to speak out—compel all of us to speak out—against the scourge of anti-Semitism wherever it exists. I want to be clear that, to me, all these things are connected. The rights I insist upon and now fight for, for all people here in the United States compels me then to stand up for Israel and look out for the rights of the Jewish people. And the rights of the Jewish people then compel me to think about a Palestinian child in Ramallah that feels trapped without opportunity. That's what Jewish values teach me. That's what the Judeo-Christian tradition teaches me. These things are connected.

And in recent years, we've seen a deeply disturbing rise in anti-Semitism in parts of the world where it would have seemed unthinkable just a few years or decades ago. This is not some passing fad; these aren't just isolated phenomena. And we know from our history they cannot be ignored. Anti-Semitism is, and always will be, a threat to broader human values to which we all must aspire. And when we allow anti-Semitism to take root, then our souls are destroyed, and it will spread.

And that's why, tonight, for the first time ever, congregations around the world are celebrating a Solidarity Shabbat. It's a chance for leaders to publicly stand against anti-Semitism and bigotry in all of its forms. And I'm proud to be a part of this movement, and I'm proud that six Ambassadors from Europe are joining us today. And their presence here—our presence together—is a reminder that we are not doomed to repeat the mistakes of the past. Our traditions, our history, can help us chart a better course as long as we are mindful of that history and those traditions, and we are vigilant in speaking out and standing up against what is wrong. It's not always easy, I think, to speak out against what is wrong, even for good people.

So I want to close with the story of one more of the many rabbis who came to Selma 50 years

ago. A few days after David Teitelbaum arrived to join the protests, he and a colleague were thrown in jail. And they spent a Friday night in custody, singing *Adon Olam* to the tune of "We Shall Overcome." [*Laughter*] And that in and of itself is a profound statement of faith and hope. But what's wonderful is, is that out of respect many of their fellow protesters began wearing what they called "freedom caps"—[*laughter*]—yarmulkes—as they marched.

And the day after they were released from prison, Rabbi Teitelbaum watched Dr. King lead a prayer meeting before crossing the Edmund Pettus Bridge. And Dr. King said, "We are like the children of Israel, marching from slavery to freedom."

That's what happens when we're true to our values. It's not just good for us, but it brings the community together—*tikkun olam*—it brings the community together, and it helps repair the world. It bridges differences that once looked unbridgeable. It creates a future for our children that once seemed unattainable. This congregation, Jewish American life is a testimony to the capacity to make our values live. But it requires courage. It requires strength. It requires that we speak the truth not just when it's easy, but when it's hard.

So may we always remember that our shared heritage makes us stronger, that our roots are intertwined. May we always choose faith over nihilism, and courage over despair, and hope over cynicism and fear. As we walk our own leg of a timeless, sacred march, may we always stand together, here at home and around the world.

Thank you. God bless you. God bless the United States of America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:57 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Gil Steinlauf, senior rabbi, Adas Israel Congregation; Jeffrey Goldberg, national correspondent, the Atlantic magazine; Mayor Rahm I. Emanuel of Chicago, IL, and Secretary of the Treasury Jacob J. Lew, in their former capacities as White House Chiefs of Staff; Cyprus's Ambassador to the U.S. Georgios Chacalli; Georgia's Ambassador to the U.S. Archil Gegeshidze; Germany's Ambassador to the U.S. Hans Peter Wittig; Hungary's Ambassador to the U.S. Réka Szemerkényi; Sweden's Ambassador to the U.S. Björn O. Lyrvall; and Spain's Ambassador to the U.S. Ramón Gil-Casares Satrústegui.

Statement on Senate Passage of Trade Promotion Authority and Trade Adjustment Assistance Legislation
May 22, 2015

Today's bipartisan Senate vote is an important step toward ensuring the United States can negotiate and enforce strong, high-standards trade agreements. If done right, these agreements are vital to expanding opportunities for the middle class, leveling the playing field for American workers, and establishing rules for the global economy that help our businesses grow and hire by selling goods made in America to the rest of the world. This trade promotion authority (TPA) legislation includes strong standards that will advance workers' rights, protect the environment, promote a free and open Internet, and it supports new robust measures to address unfair currency practices. The legislation also includes an important extension of trade adjustment assistance (TAA) to help all American workers participate in the global economy.

I want to thank Senators of both parties for sticking up for American workers by supporting smart trade and strong enforcement, and I encourage the House of Representatives to follow suit by passing TPA and TAA as soon as possible.

NOTE: The statement referred to H.R. 1314.

The President's Weekly Address
May 23, 2015

Hi, everybody. This weekend is Memorial Day, a time to pay tribute to all our men and women in uniform who've ever given their lives so that we can live in freedom and security. This year, the holiday is especially meaningful. It's the first Memorial Day since our war ended in Afghanistan.

On Monday, at Arlington Cemetery, I'll join our Gold Star families, veterans, and their loved ones to remember all our fallen heroes, including the more than 2,200 American patriots who gave their lives in Afghanistan. And I plan to share a few of their stories.

Growing up in Arizona, Wyatt Martin loved the outdoors. To him, a great day was a day spent fishing. After high school, he enlisted in the Army because he believed that the blessings he enjoyed as an American came with an obligation to give back to his country.

Ramon Morris was born in Jamaica and as a teenager came to Queens. Like so many proud immigrants, he felt a calling to serve his new country and joined the Army. He fell in love, got engaged, and the thing he wanted most was to make the world safer for his 3-year-old daughter.

In their lives, Specialist Wyatt Martin and Sergeant First Class Ramon Morris traveled different paths. But in December, their paths intersected as the final two Americans to give their lives during our combat mission in Afghanistan.

This weekend also reminds us that, around the world, our men and women in uniform continue to serve and risk their lives. In Afghanistan, our troops now have a new mission: training and advising Afghan forces. John Dawson was one of them. From Massachusetts, he loved the Bruins and the Pats. In April, he gave his life as an Army combat medic, the first American to give his life in this new mission. This Memorial Day, we'll honor Corporal Dawson as well.

Like generations of heroes before them, these Americans gave everything they had, not for glory, not even for gratitude, but for something greater than themselves. We cannot bring them back. Nor can we ease the pain of their families and friends who live with their loss.

But we are the Americans they died to defend. So what we can do—what we must do—is fulfill our sacred obligations to them, just like they fulfilled theirs to us. We have to honor their memory. We have to care for their families and our veterans who served with them. And as a nation, we have to remain worthy of their sacrifice, forever committed to the country they loved and the freedom they fought for and died for.

Thank you, and have a wonderful weekend. And may God bless our fallen heroes and their families.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 2:10 p.m. on May 22 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast on May 23. In the address, the President referred to Ariana Morris, daughter of Sfc. Ramon S. Morris, USA, who was killed in Parwan Province, Afghanistan, on December 12, 2014. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 22, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on May 23.

Statement on the Beatification of Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero y Galdámez
May 23, 2015

I join people in El Salvador and around the world today in welcoming the beatification of Archbishop Oscar Romero. I was deeply moved when I had a chance to pay my respects to Monsignor Romero at his tomb on my visit to El Salvador in 2011. Archbishop Romero

was an inspiration for people in El Salvador and across the Americas. He was a wise pastor and a courageous man who persevered in the face of opposition from extremes on both sides. He fearlessly confronted the evils he saw, guided by the needs of his beloved *pueblo*, the poor and oppressed people of El Salvador. The day after he called on Salvadoran soldiers to cease carrying out the Government's orders for repression, he was assassinated while saying Mass. He became a martyr, and millions of people throughout the Americas and the world immediately thought of him as a saint.

El Salvador has come a long way in the last 35 years. Those who once fought on the battlefield now compete for votes and negotiate in the National Assembly. But we and the Salvadoran people recognize there is much more to do. Today, in El Salvador and all of Central America, the United States is guided by the vision of Archbishop Romero. We partner with communities to promote economic opportunity, strengthen the rule of law, and create safer neighborhoods.

I am grateful to Pope Francis for his leadership in reminding us of our obligation to help those most in need and for his decision to beatify Blessed Oscar Arnulfo Romero. Let us hope that Archbishop Romero's vision can inspire all of us to respect the dignity of all human beings and to work for justice and peace in our hemisphere and beyond.

Remarks at a Memorial Day Ceremony in Arlington, Virginia
May 25, 2015

The President. Good morning, everybody.

Audience members. Good morning.

The President. Thank you, Secretary Carter, for your leadership of our men and women in uniform; General Dempsey; Major General Buchanan; Mr. Patrick Hallinan, Executive Director of Army National Military Cemeteries; Chaplain Studniewski; members of our Armed Services, veterans, and most of all, families and friends of our fallen: It is my deep honor to share this day with you again.

For 147 years, our Nation has set aside this day to pay solemn tribute to patriots who gave their last full measure of devotion for this country that we love. And while the nature of war has changed over that time, the values that drive our brave men and women in uniform remain constant: honor, courage, selflessness. Those values lived in the hearts of everyday heroes who risked everything for us in every American war, men and women who now rest forever in these quiet fields and across our land.

They lived in the patriots who sparked a revolution and who saved our Union. They lived in the young GIs who defeated tyranny in Europe and the Pacific. And this year, we mark a historic anniversary: 70 years since our victory in World War II. More than 16 million Americans left everything they knew to fight for our freedom. More than 400,000 gave their lives. And today I ask all the family and friends of our fallen World War II heroes—spouses, children, brothers and sisters, and fellow veterans of World War II—to please stand if you can, or raise your hand so that our country can thank you once more.

These same values lived in those who braved the mountains of Korea, the jungles of Vietnam, the deserts of the Middle East. And in the past decade, we've seen these values on display again in the men and women of our 9/11 generation.

For many of us, this Memorial Day is especially meaningful; it is the first since our war in Afghanistan came to an end. Today is the first Memorial Day in 14 years that the United States is not engaged in a major ground war. So on this day, we honor the sacrifice of the thousands of American servicemembers—men and women—who gave their lives since 9/11, including more than 2,200 American patriots who made the ultimate sacrifice in Afghanistan.

As an Arizona kid, Wyatt Martin loved the outdoors. He started fishing when he was 2 years old. His dad says he was pretty good for a toddler. Wyatt grew to 6-foot-4, became a

hunter, and wore flannel shirts every day, so his friends nicknamed him Paul Bunyan. He planned to go to college and work in the Arizona Game and Fish Department so that he could protect the land and waters he loved so much.

Wyatt's life was animated by the belief that the blessings that he and his family enjoyed as Americans came with an obligation to give back, an obligation to serve. So before he pursued his dream of being a good steward of the great outdoors, he enlisted in the Army. And when he deployed to Afghanistan as a combat engineer, there was no doubt in his mind that he was doing the right thing. Last summer, Wyatt told his sister, "If something happens to me, know that I went happy."

Ramon Morris was born in Jamaica, moved to Queens as a teenager. And like so many proud immigrants, he was called—compelled—to serve his new country. He too enlisted in the Army, and he even recruited his older brother Marlon to join as well. He served five tours, including several in Iraq. Along the way, he fell in love with an Army Reservist named Christina. And they had a little girl and named her Ariana. Ramon was the kind of leader who would do anything for his men, on and off the battlefield. But nothing was more important to him than being a great father to his little girl.

Now, Specialist Wyatt Martin and Sergeant First Class Ramon Morris were 15 years apart in age. They traveled greatly different paths in life. But those paths took them to the same unit. Those paths made them brothers-in-arms, serving together in Afghanistan. In December, an IED struck their vehicle. They were the last two Americans to give their lives during our combat mission in Afghanistan. Today, here in Arlington, in Section 60, Ramon lies in eternal rest. And we are honored to be joined by his brother, Sergeant First Class Marlon Laidley, who is deploying for Germany tonight. Thank you, Marlon. Thank you to your family.

These two men, these two heroes, if you saw them passing on the street, you wouldn't have known they were brothers. But under this flag, in common cause, they were bonded together to secure our liberty, to keep us safe.

My fellow Americans, this hallowed ground is more than the final resting place of heroes, it is a reflection of America itself. It's a reflection of our history, the wars we've waged for democracy, the peace we've laid to preserve it. It's a reflection of our diversity: men and women of all backgrounds, all races and creeds and circumstances and faiths, willing to defend and die for the ideals that bind us as one Nation. It's a reflection of our character, seen not only in those who are buried here, but also in the caretakers who watch over them and preserve this sacred place, and in the Sentinels of the Third Infantry Regiment who dutifully, unfailingly watch over those patriots known only to God, but never forgotten. Today a grateful nation thanks them as well.

Most Americans don't fully see, don't fully understand the sacrifice made by the 1 percent who serve in this All-Volunteer Armed Forces, a sacrifice that preserves the freedoms we too often take for granted. Few know what it's like to take a bullet for a buddy or to live with the fact that he or she took one for you. But our Gold Star families, our military families, our veterans, they know this, intimately.

Whenever I meet with our Gold Star families, like I did this morning, I hear their pride through their tears, as they flip through old photos, run their fingers over shiny medals. I see that their hearts are still broken and yet still full of love. They do not ask for awards or honors. They do not ask for special treatment. They are unfailingly humble. In the face of unspeakable loss, they represent the best of who we are.

They're people like Ramon's mother, who could carry hate for the people who killed her son. But she says: "I have no anger, no bitterness, even for the person who did this. I feel sorry for them, and I ask God to change their hearts." That's one Gold Star mother's amazing grace.

Folks like Wyatt's parents, Brian and Julie Martin, who said of their son: "He's not just our kid, he's everybody's. He's an American

soldier. And as an American soldier, he belongs to everybody."

They are siblings, like the Gold Star sister who wrote to me of her brother, Private First Class Stephen Benish, who gave his life in Iraq in 2004. She said, "Remember him not as the 1,253d war casualty, but the 6-foot-7 burst of light and positive influence he was on the world."

These sons and daughters, these brothers and sisters who lay down their lives for us, they belong to us all. They're our children too. We benefit from their light, their positive influence on the world. And it's our duty, our eternal obligation, to be there for them too: to make sure our troops always have what they need to carry out the mission, to make sure we care for all those who have served, to make sure we honor all those whom we have lost, to make sure we keep faith with our military families, to make sure we never stop searching for those who are missing or trying to bring home our prisoners of war. And we are grateful for the families of our POW/MIAs.

This may be the first Memorial Day since the end of our war in Afghanistan. But we are acutely aware, as we speak, our men and women in uniform still stand watch and still serve and still sacrifice around the world.

Several years ago, we had more than a hundred thousand troops in Afghanistan. Today, fewer than 10,000 troops remain on a mission to train and assist Afghan forces. We'll continue to bring them home and reduce our forces further, down to an Embassy presence by the end of next year. But Afghanistan remains a very dangerous place. And as so many families know, our troops continue to risk their lives for us.

Growing up in Massachusetts, John Dawson was an honor student who played varsity soccer, loved the Bruins, loved the Pats, was always up for fun, running into a room while spraying silly string, or photobombing long before it was in style.

John was passionate about service. He shared the same convictions of so many we honor today, who wanted nothing more than to join a common cause and be part of something bigger than himself. He channeled his love of cycling into charity bike rides with his church. He joined the Army. And as a combat medic, he fulfilled his dream of helping people. He loved his job.

In April, an attacker wearing an Afghan uniform fired at a group of American soldiers. And Army Corporal John Dawson became the first American servicemember to give his life to this new mission to train Afghan forces. The words on John's dog tag were those of Scripture: "Greater love has no other than this, than to lay down your life for your friends."

The Americans who rest beneath these beautiful hills and in sacred ground across our country and around the world, they are why our Nation endures. Each simple stone marker, arranged in perfect military precision, signifies the cost of our blessings. It is a debt we can never fully repay, but it is a debt we will never stop trying to fully repay. By remaining a nation worthy of their sacrifice. By living our own lives the way the fallen lived theirs, a testament that "Greater love has no other than this, than to lay down your life for your friends."

We are so grateful for them. We are so grateful for the families of our fallen. May God bless our fallen heroes and their families and all who serve. And may He continue to bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:32 a.m. in the Memorial Amphitheater at Arlington National Cemetery. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of Defense Ashton B. Carter; Maj. Gen. Jeffrey S. Buchanan, USA, commanding general, and Col. Gary R. Studniewski, USA, Joint Force headquarters command chaplain, National Capital Region and Military District of Washington; Katie Martin, sister of Spc. Wyatt Martin, USA, who was killed in Parwan Province, Afghanistan, on December 12, 2014; Christina Strange, fiancée, Ariana Morris, daughter, and Ilsa Laidley, mother, of Sfc. Ramon S. Morris, USA, who was killed in Parwan Province, Afghanistan, on December 12, 2014; Kelly Benish, sister of Pfc. Stephen C. Benish, USA, who was killed near Ramadi, Iraq, on November 28, 2004; and Cpl. John Dawson, USA, who was killed in Jalalabad, Afghanistan, on April 8.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization
May 26, 2015

President Obama. Well, it is a great pleasure to welcome my friend, former Prime Minister of Norway Jens Stoltenberg, back to the Oval Office. The last time he was here, he came as a Prime Minister. He's now the Secretary General of NATO. And we've had an excellent discussion.

Flooding in Texas

Before I mention some of the topics that we discussed on NATO, let me just say a couple of things. First of all, I had a chance this morning to talk to Governor Abbott of Texas to express condolences for the terrible flooding that's been taking place there. Our thoughts and prayers are with the families and the communities that have been affected by some of these devastating, record-breaking floods.

I assured Governor Abbott that he could count on the help of the Federal Government. We have FEMA personnel already on the ground. They are coordinating with Texas Emergency Management authorities, and I will anticipate that there will be some significant requests made to Washington. My pledge to him is that we will expedite those requests to make sure that both search-and-rescue operations where necessary, but also recovery operations occur as efficiently and as quickly as possible.

Electronic Surveillance Legislation

The second thing I want to just mention very quickly: Last week, Congress obviously was busy. It left town without finishing necessary work on FISA and some of the reforms that are necessary to the PATRIOT Act.

I said over a year ago that it was important for us to properly balance our needs for security with civil liberties. And this administration engaged on a bipartisan, bicameral basis, talking to Republicans and Democrats about how we could preserve necessary authorities, but provide the public greater assurance that those authorities were not being abused.

The House of Representatives did its work and came up with what they've called the USA FREEDOM Act, which strikes an appropriate balance. Our intelligence communities are confident that they can work with the authorities that are provided in that act. It passed on a bipartisan basis and overwhelmingly. It was then sent to the Senate. The Senate did not act. And the problem we have now is that those authorities run out at midnight on Sunday.

So I strongly urge the Senate to work through this recess and make sure that they identify a way to get this done. Keep in mind that the most controversial provision in there, which had to do with the gathering of telephone exchanges in a single government database, that has been reformed in USA FREEDOM Act. But you have a whole range of authorities that are also embodied in the PATRIOT Act that are noncontroversial, that everybody agrees are necessary to keep us safe and secure. Those also are at risk of lapsing.

So this needs to get done. And I would urge folks to just work through whatever issues can still exist, make sure we don't have, on midnight Sunday night, this task still undone, because it's necessary to keep the American people safe and secure.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization

Now, with respect to NATO, obviously, this is a challenging and important time for NATO, and we are very lucky to have General Secretary Stoltenberg at the helm during this time. We had a chance to discuss the situation in Ukraine and the increasingly aggressive posture that Russia has taken, and we affirmed that NATO is the cornerstone not just of transatlantic security, but in many ways is the cornerstone for global security.

In Wales, we were able to not only affirm the intentions of the alliance to uphold its

article 5 obligations, but we also put in place a whole host of measures to reassure front-line states and to put in place what we call the readiness action plan. That is currently being implemented, and I was pleased to hear that not only the United States, but our other NATO allies have been doing what's necessary to make sure that we have positioned the resources and assets necessary to protect all NATO members.

We also reaffirmed the importance of implementing the Minsk agreement and ensuring that Ukraine is able to enjoy the same territorial integrity and sovereignty as any other country. And we'll continue to support Ukraine through the NATO-Ukraine partnership that predates the crisis that occurred both in Crimea and now in eastern Ukraine.

We also had an opportunity to discuss the fact that NATO is involved not just in the fault line of East and West that has traditionally been NATO's concern; NATO is necessarily recognizing a whole range of global challenges, particularly on what we call the southern front. And we are working closely with NATO allies to make sure that we are partnering with other countries to address issues of counterterrorism; making sure that we continue to coordinate effectively in the fight against ISIL, because all 28 NATO members are members of the coalition to support the Iraqi Government against the ISIL fight; to address the challenges that exist in Libya, right across from the Mediterranean, and obviously, there's great concern among a number of NATO members about the spillover effects of a chaotic situation there.

That means increased defense capacity-building with other countries like Iraq or GCC countries that are interested in working with us, as well as the African Union. It also means that we have to think about whether we are deploying and arranging our assets effectively to meet that goal.

And finally, we had a chance to discuss not only how NATO is positioned, but also making sure that we finish the job with respect to Afghanistan. And when we meet in Warsaw later this year, we'll have an opportunity to assess how we will continue to support the Afghan National Security Forces, now that we have transitioned out of our combat mission, to make sure that they can do the job, that they can secure and protect their own country. That will require resources, training, and assistance from not only the United States, but also from all NATO countries. And I'm very gratified that the General Secretary, I think, has made this an important focus of the work that's to be done.

So we have a busy agenda. There are many challenges. The one thing that we know is that NATO is going to be a central component of us being able to meet those challenges. And as the strongest alliance in the history of the world, we need to make sure that each member country is properly resourcing and committing to the NATO missions that have been set forth. That's the only way that we're going to maintain the kind of collective self-defense that has been the hallmark of peace and prosperity for many, many decades now.

So, Jens.

Secretary General Stoltenberg. Thank you. It's great to be back in the White House and to meet with President of the United States, Barack Obama. And, Barack, it's great to meet you again, also because I feel that we have very much developed a common understanding of—that the alliance is facing a new security environment.

And I would like to start to thank you by to—for everything that you personally have done to show leadership in a time where we really need U.S. leadership and also the initiative you took—the European Reassurance Initiative—which you launched a year ago and which has been of great importance when it comes to U.S. presence in Europe. And the U.S. military presence in Europe is the key to provide reassurance to all allies.

And I have traveled around in the alliance, and all the places I have gone, I have met U.S. service men and women. And the message they send is the same: that America stands with Europe, Europe and America stand together, and NATO will defend and protect all allies against any threat.

This is even more important because we are facing new threats, new challenges, coming both from the east and from the south. And as you stated, or as you said, we are adapting, we are responding, we are increasing the readiness and the preparedness of our forces. European allies are taking the lead in establishing a speed of force—[*inaudible*]—in this joint task force. And in addition, we have the great commitment and the contributions from the United States.

And altogether, this is the biggest reinforcement of our collective defense since the end of the cold war. And we are also setting up command-and-control units in all the eastern allied countries, underlining that NATO is present, NATO is there to protect and defend all allies.

We discussed Crimea, Ukraine, and the importance of the full implementation of the Minsk agreements. That's the path to peace, and I urge all parties to fully implement the Minsk agreements and Russia to stop supporting the separatists and to rid all its forces from eastern Ukraine.

When it comes to the south, I welcome that all NATO allies are contributing to the U.S.-led coalition against ISIL. NATO, in addition, support countries in the region to increase their ability to defend themself, to create stability. And the aim is to be able to project stability without always deploying large number of forces.

And defense capacity-building is, therefore, key to NATO. We have increased our support for Jordan. We are in the process of developing defense capacity-building for Iraq. And we stand ready to do so also in Libya when the situation on the ground allows.

And of course, we will continue to support Afghanistan also after the end of our current mission, to continue to support Afghans to be able to take care of their own security also in the future.

All of this will require resources, both for collective defense, for cooperative security, for defense capacity-building. And therefore, they are high on my agenda. The main topic I raise in all capitals I visit is the importance of delivering on the defense investment pledge we made to stop the cuts in defense budgets and to start gradually to increase and to aim at 2 percent.

The U.S. is already well above that, so this is something which is about all the allies. And I spend a lot of time urging them to increase their defense budgets, because we need more resources to be able to deliver what we already promised both when it comes to collective defense and when it comes to cooperative security.

We will meet again at—all allies will meet again at the NATO summit in July in Warsaw, 2016. I'm looking forward to that because that will be a basis for take stock of the progress we have made, but also to chart the course forward. And the key issue is always the unity, the cohesion of the alliance. I am very grateful for your strong personal commitment to the alliance, to transatlantic security. And I'm looking forward to continue to work together with you. All right?

Thank you.

President Obama. Thank you. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:47 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to H.R. 2048; the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization; and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Termination of the Emergency With Respect to the Risk of Nuclear Proliferation Created by the Accumulation of a Large Volume of Weapons-Usable Fissile Material in the Territory of the Russian Federation

May 26, 2015

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Consistent with subsection 204(b) of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, 50 U.S.C. 1703(b), I hereby report that I have issued an Executive Order that terminates the

national emergency declared in Executive Order 13617 of June 25, 2012, and revokes that Executive Order. I have determined that the situation that gave rise to this national emergency has been significantly altered by the successful implementation of the Agreement Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Russian Federation Concerning the Disposition of Highly Enriched Uranium Extracted from Nuclear Weapons, dated February 18, 1993, and related contracts and agreements (collectively, the "HEU Agreements").

I issued Executive Order 13617 to deal with the unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States constituted by the risk of nuclear proliferation created by the accumulation of weapons-usable fissile material in the territory of the Russian Federation. Executive Order 13617 and its predecessor, Executive Order 13159 of June 22, 2000, helped to ensure the preservation and proper and complete transfer to the Government of the Russian Federation of all payments due to it under the HEU Agreements, thereby protecting those assets from attachment, judgment, decree, lien, execution, garnishment, or other judicial process, which would have had the effect of jeopardizing the full implementation of the HEU Agreements to the detriment of U.S. national security and foreign policy.

With the successful conversion of 500 metric tons of highly enriched uranium extracted from Russian nuclear weapons into low enriched uranium, the transfer to the United States of that low enriched uranium for use as fuel in commercial nuclear reactors, and the completion of all payments to the Russian Federation, there is no further need for the protective blocking imposed by Executive Order 13617. For this reason I have determined that it is necessary to terminate the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13617 and revoke that order.

I am enclosing a copy of the Executive Order I have issued.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to John A. Boehner, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate. Executive Order 13695 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume. An original was not available for verification of the content of this letter.

Statement on the Clean Water Rule
May 27, 2015

For more than 40 years, American families and businesses across the country have counted on the Clean Water Act to protect the streams and wetlands we rely on for our way of life, from recreation to public health to a growing economy. In recent years, however, court decisions have led to uncertainty and a need for clarification. One in three Americans now gets drinking water from streams lacking clear protection, and businesses and industries that depend on clean water face uncertainty and delay, which costs our economy every day. Too many of our waters have been left vulnerable to pollution. That's why I called on the Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to clear up the confusion and uphold our basic duty to protect these vital resources.

Today, after extensive input from the American public, they're doing just that: finalizing the Clean Water Rule to restore protection for the streams and wetlands that form the foundation of our Nation's water resources, without getting in the way of farming, ranching, or forestry. This rule will provide the clarity and certainty businesses and industry need about which waters are protected by the Clean Water Act, and it will ensure polluters who knowingly threaten our waters can be held accountable. My administration has made historic commitments to clean water, from restoring iconic watersheds like the Chesapeake Bay and the Great Lakes

to preserving more than a thousand miles of rivers and other waters for future generations. With today's rule, we take another step towards protecting the waters that belong to all of us.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser in Miami, Florida
May 27, 2015

Well, first of all, let me thank Stephen and Sabina. And they have just been such great friends for such a long time through thick and thin. And I just want to say how much I appreciate everything that they've done, not just for me, but for the Democratic Party—[*inaudible*]—so we're proud of her and her mom. There's nothing more important than teaching.

And I want to thank all of you. I see a lot of friends, folks like the Adlers who have supported me and Joe and been there. And I would not have the great privilege and the great honor of serving this country had it not been for some of the folks in this room.

I'm going to be very brief on the front end because I want to spend as much time as possible in a conversation, answer questions or take comments, ideas. Let me just say that we're at a fascinating time in the country's history. Since I took office, we've pulled ourselves out of the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression. And by almost every economic measure, by every economic measure, we are better off and, in some cases, significantly better off than when I came into office.

Not just the stock market or corporate profits, but unemployment going from 10 percent to 5.4 percent, cutting the deficit by two-thirds, expanding Pell grants, providing 16 million people health care that didn't have it so we've got the lowest uninsured rate since they started keeping track, making sure that more children have access to early childhood education, improvements in reading scores, improvements in high school graduation rates, improvements in college attendance rates, doubling of clean energy. By almost every measure, this country has come bouncing back in ways that a lot of folks in 2009 might not have anticipated.

But what's also true is, is that there is so much work that's left undone, so many things we could be doing to make sure that more people have access to the ladders of opportunity that have been the hallmark of this country. If we pass immigration reform, that would not only improve our economy, drive down our deficit, but it would make sure that America continued to be a land—a nation of laws and a nation of immigrants—where we're attracting incredible talent and vitality from every corner of the globe.

If we were serious about rebuilding our infrastructure, we could put people back to work right now, and half a percentage, maybe a full percentage point of GDP growth, and lay the foundation for continued expansion and economic competitiveness for decades to come. If we have a budget that continues to put our money into research so that we are at the cutting edge of innovation, then who knows what new inventions and new industries will be created right here in the United States, putting Americans back to work. If we continue to make investments in job training and early childhood education, making college more affordable, then our young people will be prepared for a 21st-century global economy.

On all these fronts, we've done great work, but we have so much more that we could be doing. And the reason it's not getting done is not because we don't know what to do, it's because we're stuck in Congress on so many of these issues.

And as I made very clear my determination—talked to my staff about several years ago, after it became apparent there were some things that Congress was having trouble getting done, we're not waiting for Congress—we're moving forward on everything from precision medicine to rationalizing where we can our immigration system.

But ultimately, the great genius of this democracy is that the most important office is the office of citizen. We've got to get people involved so that Congress ultimately responds to

an electorate that is expressing our highest and best values around issues like climate change and issues like education and issues like opportunity and poverty.

And I am confident that we're going to be able to do that, but I can't do it without folks like you. Michelle is very pleased that I cannot run—[*laughter*]—and it is a liberating feeling in the sense that the amount of time I have left, it concentrates the mind, and I think a lot of folks have been surprised at the degree to which we are moving and pushing and trying whatever we can to advance the goals of making sure that every American in this country and every child in this country, if they're willing to work hard, can get ahead, and that opportunity and prosperity is broad based.

But ultimately, an 8-year span in the life of a country is pretty short. We can get a lot done, but part of what we're also doing is laying the foundation so that we then pass that baton to the next administration and we institutionalize some of the progress that we've been making.

And ultimately, how much staying power these things have depends on a Congress that is thinking about our future. And that's why your presence here is so important. This is not something I'm doing for me, this is something we are doing together. Because it's going to be just the blink of an eye before I am, like you, a citizen, who has returned from office, but still occupies the most important position in a democracy. And together, I want us to make sure that we are doing everything we can to pass on the kind of America that gave us such incredible opportunity and allowed us to be here today.

Thanks.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:40 p.m. at the residence of Stephen H. and Sabine Bittel. In his remarks, he referred to Michael M. Adler, chairman and chief executive officer, Adler Group, Inc., and his wife Judith; and Vice President Joe Biden. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks During a Hurricane Preparedness Briefing at the National Hurricane Center in Miami, Florida
May 28, 2015

Well, I am here at the National Hurricane Center for our annual update on preparations for hurricane season, which begin on Monday. And I want to thank our NOAA Administrator Kathy Sullivan, FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate, and their teams for helping to lead this briefing.

Flooding in Texas and Oklahoma

Before we talk a little bit about the hurricane season, obviously, our thoughts and prayers are still with the families and the communities that have been devastated by the flooding in Texas and Oklahoma. Lives have been lost, and our condolences go out to the families that have been affected. But there's going to be a lot of work that has to be done for rebuilding.

Craig just informed me, gave me an update on the coordination that we're doing between Federal and State and local respondents. The coordination is good. They appear to have the assets they need at this stage to respond, but there's going to be a lot of rebuilding. And we as a nation are going to have to help the same way we do anytime that folks are affected by these natural disasters.

And so we will stay in close coordination with them to make sure that our response is quick, that we're cutting through bureaucracy, and that we're helping them recover. And there's still going to be some weather events over the next several days that will potentially make things a little tougher for folks, but I'm confident, obviously, that these communities will ultimately get back on their feet.

Hurricane Preparedness

It does remind us that it is never too early for disaster preparation. Today FEMA released

our national preparedness report, summarizing new progress at a national level, along with submissions from across the country. We are in constant coordination with our State and local partners to make sure that their action plans are up to date.

We're joined today by our State partners who are critical in all this work, because they are the first responders, the people on the ground who are actually making a difference and taking a lot of the information that we get here and funneling that to local communities. So we've got partners from Florida, North Carolina, Virginia; they've done great work to prepare for hurricane season.

The truth is, we are better prepared than ever for the storms of today. The technology has improved, the forecasting has improved, the tools we have to model what may happen with something like storm surge has all gotten a lot better. And so not only do we have better information, but we have new mechanisms to disseminate it.

We're also focusing on making ourselves more resilient to the impacts of a changing climate that are having significant effects on both the pace and intensity of some of these storms. The best climate scientists in the world are telling us that extreme weather events like hurricanes are likely to become more powerful. When you combine stronger storms with rising seas, that's a recipe for more devastating floods.

Climate change didn't cause Hurricane Sandy, but it might have made it stronger. The fact that the sea level in New York Harbor is about a foot higher than a century ago certainly made the storm surge worse. And that's why we are seeking to work with Congress to make sure that we are focused on resilience and the steps we can take to fortify our infrastructure in these communities. We're fortunate to have a couple of outstanding Members of Congress here on a bipartisan basis. Congressman Carlos Curbelo and Congressman Ted Deutch both represent Florida and obviously have a shared interest in making sure that we are building the kind of resilience that we may need.

Miami, for example, already has to spend hundreds of millions of dollars just to adapt its water system to the more frequent flooding that it's already experiencing from rising seas. That's why I put forward America's first Climate Action Plan 2 years ago. I called for a climate resilience toolkit to help families and business owners in communities plan for the impacts of a changing climate, and that toolkit is now online at toolkit.climate.gov.

Responding to a hurricane is a team effort. From the Federal to the local levels, we all have a role to play. So I encourage every American, no matter where you live, to check out ready.gov—ready.gov—where you will find information on making plans for your family, building an emergency supply kit, knowing what to do when disaster strikes. This is something that Administrator Fugate has been like a broken record about every single year, but he's absolutely right that the best preparedness is the preparedness that's being taken by individual families, homeowners, business owners. If they have a plan, if they have ideas about how they will respond to warnings, and they're paying attention, then the collective effort obviously goes a lot more smoothly.

Finally, I just want to thank all the hardworking public servants who help America prepare for and respond to and recover from emergencies. Sometimes, we take for granted what our public servants do. Sometimes, we spend a lot of time griping about government, and we spend a lot of time complaining about folks that we're not seeing and bureaucrats and don't really appreciate that basic information, like what the weather is like, when storms come, how we're going to respond. That all involves our public servants at the Federal, State, and local levels. And they may be in the background until a disaster strikes, and suddenly, we realize how much we depend on them.

And so I think now is a good time for us to remind ourselves and make sure we're properly resourcing folks who, in dire straits, we really depend on to make sure we're safe, our families are safe, and that we can recover from really devastating attacks by Mother Nature.

And I also want to thank our military, our National Guard, for the work that they do. But our first responders and our folks at the local level, they've been doing some outstanding work.

I really want to lift up in particular some of the men and women who deploy on search and rescue, not just here domestically, but internationally. We've just had a couple of teams made up of expert, finely trained, local first responders who essentially volunteer. They just came back from Nepal, where they saved a couple of lives. In the past, they have saved lives in places like Haiti, after the devastating earthquake there. They've been working around the clock in Texas. They are always ready to do the selfless work that we should all be very, very proud of. So thank you so much for the outstanding work that you do.

All right, everybody, thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:09 p.m.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Attorney General Loretta E. Lynch and an Exchange With Reporters
May 29, 2015

The President. Attorney General Lynch and I just discussed a wide range of issues in the regular meetings that I have with my—some of my top Cabinet members. And we discussed issues of cybersecurity. We discussed the important role that the FBI and the Justice Department play in our counterterrorism efforts, as well as discussing issues like community policing and human trafficking.

But I thought this would be a good opportunity before we break for the weekend to just remind everyone that on Sunday at midnight, a whole bunch of authorities that we use in order to prevent terrorist attacks in this country expire. Now, fortunately, the House of Representatives was able to put forward a piece of legislation, the USA FREEDOM Act, that received overwhelming bipartisan support. And what it does is not only continue authorities that currently exist and are not controversial: for example, the capacity of the FBI or our other law enforcement agencies to use what's called a roving wiretap. So if we know that there is an individual who—where there's probable cause, that that individual might be engaged in a terrorist act, but is switching cell phones, we can move from cell phone to cell phone. Not a controversial provision. Those authorities would be continued.

What the USA FREEDOM Act also does is, it reforms the bulk data collection program that had been of significant concern and that I promised we could reform over a year and a half ago. So we now have Democrats and Republicans in both the House and the Senate who think this is the right way to go. We've got our law enforcement and national security teams and civil liberties proponents and advocates who say this is the right way to go. The only thing that's standing in the way is a handful of Senators who are resisting these reforms despite law enforcement and the IC saying let's go ahead and get this done.

So we've only got a few days. These authorities expire on Sunday at midnight. And I don't want us to be in a situation in which, for a certain period of time, those authorities go away, and suddenly, we're dark and, heaven forbid, we've got a problem where we could have prevented a terrorist attack or apprehended someone who was engaged in dangerous activity, but we didn't do so simply because of inaction in the Senate. So I have indicated to Leader McConnell and other Senators I expect them to take action and take action swiftly. That's what the American people deserve.

And this is not an issue in which we have to choose between security and civil liberties; this is an issue in which we, in fact, have struck the right balance and shaped a piece of legislation that everybody can support. So let's go ahead and get it done. All right?

Q. Mr. President——

Thank you.

Former Speaker of the House of Representatives J. Dennis Hastert/International Federation of Association Football (FIFA) Corruption Allegations/Iraq

Q. Do you have a reaction to the indictment of Speaker Hastert and to the FIFA scandal?

The President. Thank you very much. Great to see you guys. Thank you.

Q. Any reaction to Iraq?

Q. Rahm Emanuel says he is saddened by the indictment of Speaker Hastert. Are you saddened by it?

The President. Thank you so much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:23 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to H.R. 2048. A reporter referred to Mayor Rahm I. Emanuel of Chicago, IL.

The President's Weekly Address
May 30, 2015

Hi, everybody. As President and Commander in Chief, my greatest responsibility is the safety of the American people. And in our fight against terrorists, we need to use every effective tool at our disposal, both to defend our security and to protect the freedoms and civil liberties enshrined in our Constitution.

But tomorrow—Sunday at midnight—some important tools we use against terrorists will expire. That's because Congress has not renewed them and because legislation that would, the USA FREEDOM Act, is stuck in the Senate. I want to be very clear about what this means.

Today, when investigating terrorist networks, our national security professionals can seek a court order to obtain certain business records. Our law enforcement professionals can seek a roving wiretap to keep up with terrorists when they switch cell phones. We can seek a wiretap on so-called lone wolves, suspected terrorists who may not be directly tied to a terrorist group. These tools are not controversial. Since 9/11, they've been renewed numerous times. FBI Director James Comey says they are "essential" and that losing them would "severely" impact terrorism investigations. But if Congress doesn't act by midnight tomorrow, these tools go away.

The USA FREEDOM Act also accomplishes something I called for a year and a half ago: It ends the bulk metadata program—the bulk collection of phone records—as it currently exists and puts in place new reforms. The Government will no longer hold these records, telephone providers will. The act also includes other changes to our surveillance laws, including more transparency, to help build confidence among the American people that your privacy and civil liberties are being protected. But if Congress doesn't act tomorrow, at midnight, these reforms will be in jeopardy as well.

It doesn't have to be this way. The USA FREEDOM Act reflects ideas from privacy advocates, our private sector partners, and our national security experts. It already passed the House of Representatives with overwhelming bipartisan support: Republicans and Democrats. That doesn't happen very often. A majority of the Senate—Republicans and Democrats—have voted to move it forward.

So what's the problem? A small group of Senators is standing in the way. And, unfortunately, some folks are trying to use this debate to score political points. But this shouldn't and can't be about politics. This is a matter of national security. Terrorists like Al Qaida and ISIL aren't suddenly going to stop plotting against us at midnight tomorrow. And we shouldn't surrender the tools that help keep us safe. It would be irresponsible. It would be reckless. We shouldn't allow it to happen.

So today I'm calling on Americans to join me in speaking with one voice to the Senate: Put the politics aside. Put our national security first. Pass the USA FREEDOM Act now. And let's protect the security and civil liberties of every American. Thanks very much.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 11:55 a.m. on May 29 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast on May 30. In the address, the President referred to H.R. 2048; and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 29, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on May 30.

Statement on the Death of Joseph R. "Beau" Biden III
May 30, 2015

Michelle and I are grieving tonight. Beau Biden was a friend of ours. His beloved family—Hallie, Natalie, and Hunter—are friends of ours. And Joe and Jill Biden are as good as friends get.

Beau took after Joe. He studied the law like his dad, even choosing the same law school. He chased a life of public service like his dad, serving in Iraq and as Delaware's attorney general. Like his dad, Beau was a good, big-hearted, devoutly Catholic, and deeply faithful man, who made a difference in the lives of all he touched. And he lives on in their hearts.

But for all that Beau Biden achieved in his life, nothing made him prouder, nothing made him happier, nothing claimed a fuller focus of his love and devotion than his family. Just like his dad.

Joe is one of the strongest men we've ever known. He's as strong as they come, and nothing matters to him more than family. It's one of the things we love about him. And it is a testament to Joe and Jill—to who they are—that Beau lived a life that was full, a life that mattered, a life that reflected their reverence for family.

The Bidens have more family than they know: in the Delaware they love, in the Senate Joe reveres, across this country that he has served for more than 40 years. And they have a family right here in the White House, where hundreds of hearts ache tonight: for Hallie, Natalie, and Hunter; for Joe and for Jill; for Beau's brother Hunter, his sister Ashley; and for the entire Biden clan.

"I have believed the best of every man," wrote the poet William Butler Yeats, "And find that to believe it is enough to make a bad man show him at his best or even a good man swing his lantern higher." Beau Biden believed the best of us all. For him, and for his family, we swing our lanterns higher. Michelle and I humbly pray for the good Lord to watch over Beau Biden and to protect and comfort his family here on Earth.

NOTE: The statement referred to Hallie O. Biden, wife of Joseph R. "Beau" Biden III, and their children R. Hunter and Natalie P. Biden.

Remarks Following a Meeting With King Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands
June 1, 2015

President Obama. Well, it is a great honor to welcome His and Her Majesties, Willem-Alexander and Queen Maxima. They have been wonderful friends to myself and Michelle and the girls personally. I want to thank, once again, the people of the Netherlands for the incredible hospitality they had shown us in the past, including most recently during the Nuclear Security Summit that took place in Amsterdam and The Hague.

We have 400 years of history between our two countries. In Europe, that doesn't mean a lot—[*laughter*]—but in the United States, that is as old as it gets. And so the Dutch are some of our oldest and most precious allies. That continues to this day.

We had the opportunity to discuss the shared work that we do through NATO in making sure that the transatlantic relationship stays strong. We discussed the continuing

challenges in Ukraine and the importance of making sure that the Minsk agreement moves forward. And I continued to make the solemn commitment to support the Dutch in the investigation of the Malaysian Airlines tragedy and to make sure that not only is the truth brought forward, but there's accountability for what took place.

We discussed our shared concerns in other parts of the world, including in the Middle East, where Dutch troops work alongside U.S. and other coalition members to help defeat ISIL and to stabilize Iraq.

We talked about the excellent work that the United States partnered with the Dutch when it comes to Ebola and the work that still remains to be done around establishing the kind of health infrastructure that's going to be so important to preventing diseases in the future.

I was particularly impressed with the outstanding work that Her Majesty the Queen is doing with the United Nations around inclusive financing. One of the things that we know is that all around the world there is enormous human potential that so often is locked up because of the difficulty of accessing capital. And the creative work that Her Majesty is doing in providing microloans and new mechanisms for credit can make an enormous difference, particularly, I should add, when it is provided equally to women, who so often are even facing greater challenges in accessing capital.

And we discussed the ongoing work that we'll be doing to build on the progress that's been made over the last several years through the Nuclear Security Summit and the importance of nonproliferation.

So whether it's in Afghanistan, whether it's in public health issues, whether it's in Europe and the need for us to maintain solidarity and uphold the principles that have been central to building a unified and peaceful Europe, the Netherlands has consistently been one of our greatest allies. And I think for His Majesty the King and Queen to have gone to Arlington and to honor not only the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, but to meet some of that greatest generation who helped to liberate Europe and the Netherlands and to usher in this era of peace and prosperity, is extraordinarily significant.

So many of our World War II veterans during this 70-year anniversary are at the twilight of their lives, and for them to hear directly from such important people how much of a difference they made and to get that recognition is truly significant. So I'm grateful, Your Majesty, for that and even more grateful for the continuing friendship that the Dutch people have shown the United States of America.

King Willem-Alexander. Well, thank you very much, Mr. President, for your warm words of welcome here. On behalf of my wife and myself, we're very thankful to be back in the White House. Great to see you again since last year at the Nuclear Security Summit.

First of all, I'd like to express my sympathies to the people in Texas and Oklahoma who are suffering in such severe weather conditions right now. The floodings are terrible. The victims and families are going through a rough time. And if we can help, as the Netherlands, of course we are willing to help.

Second of all, my heartfelt condolences for the Vice President Biden for a second big tragedy in his life, now losing a son while he is serving as best he can as a Vice President here in the United States.

The main reason for our visit obviously was to thank the United States for what you've done for us 70 years ago. Especially the 82d and 101 Airborne have played a major role in liberating our country, giving—taking away the Nazi oppression and giving us back justice and rule of law and freedom. And ever since that moment, we are grateful. And as long as the Netherlands exist, we will be grateful for the United States for the—giving that to us.

This morning, at Arlington, the wreath-laying ceremony, we honored those people that gave their utmost, their life, for our country. And speaking with the veterans and the Rosies was very impressive for us: veterans that have liberated my country, the Rosies that took the place in the industry here and that kept this country running so that the men could fight on the other side of the ocean. Very, very impressive, I must say. And once again, U.S.A., thank you verymuch for liberating us.

Those values that you stood for at the time and that were not available to us and we regained, we now stand shoulder by shoulder fighting ISIL—"shoulder by shoulder," meaning a small shoulder and a big shoulder. [*Laughter*] But still, we stand next to each other, and we have the same values we want to defend facing ISIL.

So having said that, the next part of our visit will be also looking back at the Dutch history. First, Hudson in nineteen—1609 and then the first salutes to the American flag from the Island of Statia in November 1776. When the *Andrew Doria* sailed there, the Dutch saluted the flag. And ever since, we've had a great bond with your country. Four and a half million Americans are from Dutch descent. You are the largest investor in our country; we are the third largest in your country. So this is really worthwhile to continue our relationship, and that's what we are working on these days.

We're going to Michigan—to Holland, Michigan, to Grand Rapids—to see a lot of these descendants, and we're going to Chicago, where the—where we hope to have a party—your hometown, obviously. But also the origin of House—the House of Orange is hoping to see some good music there at Millennium Park and also look at some serious topics as healthy aging, urban farming, so all in all, a lot of things that we can learn from each other.

But once again, Mr. President, thank you very much for receiving my wife and myself here. It is great to see you again. All the best of luck for United States.

President Obama. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:37 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization. King Willem-Alexander referred to Joseph R. "Beau" Biden III, son of Vice President Joe Biden, who died on May 30.

Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session at a Town Hall Meeting With Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative Fellows
June 1, 2015

The President. Well, thank you so much, Zin Mar, for your introduction and for your example and your commitment to build a free and open press in Myanmar and all the hope that you represent. Please give her a big round of applause. She did an outstanding job.

Well, to all of you, welcome to Washington. Welcome to the White House. And while I know that you've been here a few weeks, let me just say again, on behalf of the American people, welcome to the United States of America. We are thrilled to have you here.

I'm not going to give a long speech, because what I really want to do is have a conversation with you like the one that I had when I was in Myanmar. So this is a town hall meeting; the less I speak, the more questions you get to ask. [*Laughter*] But I do want to take a few minutes to explain why I believe so strongly in the work that brings us together today and why your presence here is so important.

I think all of you know I have a special attachment to Southeast Asia. As a boy, I lived in Jakarta. My mother spent years working in villages to help women improve their lives. So Southeast Asia helped shape who I am and how I see the world. And as President, I've made it a pillar of my foreign policy to make sure that the United States is more deeply engaged in the Asia-Pacific region, including Southeast Asia. And I want to welcome the Ambassadors from across ASEAN. Thank you for being here and for your partnership. Give them a big round of applause.

So I've deepened America's ties with Southeast Asia because your region is critical to our shared future. There are more than 600 million people who live in the ASEAN countries, and you reflect an incredible diversity of faiths and ethnic groups and backgrounds and cultures. And that diversity has to be celebrated, and it has to be protected. We have incredible economic engines like Singapore. We've got growing economies like

the Philippines and Vietnam and Malaysia. And we can see growth that is lifting people out of poverty and creating more jobs and trade and opportunity for all of our countries.

We've seen a historic democratic transition in Indonesia. We've got elections coming later this year in Myanmar. Communities in Laos and Brunei are working for development that's sustainable and protecting the environment. And we're seeing new commitments to the education of young women and girls, as is true in Cambodia. The people of Thailand played a critical role in the global response to the earthquake in Nepal. And we are mindful of the King of Thailand's health issues lately, and we wish him the best, and our hopes and prayers are with him. So Southeast Asia is stepping up. It's on the move.

And today, America's relationship with the region is stronger than ever. I'm proud to be the first American President to meet regularly with all 10 ASEAN leaders. I will continue to do so until I am no longer President.

We've strengthened our alliances, including with the Philippines. We've forged new partnerships with Indonesia and Malaysia and Vietnam. Our trade with ASEAN has been growing. We're pursuing the Trans-Pacific Partnership. We're working with ASEAN to bind the region more closely together and confront shared challenges and uphold international rules and norms, including freedom of navigation, to—and to ensure that disputes are resolved peacefully. At the moment, several of our nations are working to rescue desperate Rohingya migrants who are at sea, which reflects our commitment to the security and dignity and human rights of every human being.

But despite all the work I've been doing and the Ambassadors have been doing, building these stronger ties is not just the work of government. They have to be rooted in partnerships between our people and especially young people like you.

All across Southeast Asia, almost two-thirds of the population is under 35 years old. So this is a young part of the world. Technology is giving you more power to communicate and to organize like never before. In Vietnam, tens of millions of people are connected on Facebook. Across the region, you are civil society leaders working for democracy and human rights and religious tolerance. You are entrepreneurs who are turning your ideas into new businesses, activists fighting for the environment and against climate change. And that's the power that young people have and the spirit of optimism and idealism that you represent. So you're inspiring to me. And I've made it clear that America wants to be your partner. We want to help you succeed.

So, 2 years ago, we launched the Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative—YSEALI—to help empower young people like you, to give you more of the skills and resources and networks that you need to turn your ideas into action. And since then, we've offered workshops, online networking, exchanges, professional development, hands-on training. And today, YSEALI network includes nearly 35,000 young people like you.

Last year in Myanmar, at the town hall meeting that Zin Mar mentioned, I announced our fellowship program to bring young leaders from across the region to the United States to help develop their skills. And for this first class of 75, more than 1,000 people applied. The competition was intense. Today I'm proud to welcome you as the first class of YSEALI Fellows. We're very proud of you. And I've had a chance to read about some of you and the amazing things that you've been doing. And I suspect that Niema Remejoso, from the Philippines—there she is right there—[*laughter*]—she spoke for a lot of you. She said, "Am I dreaming, or is this really happening?" So it's really happening. [*Laughter*]

You come from all 10 ASEAN nations, from capital cities and rural towns. You represent different faiths and backgrounds and different beliefs. Obviously, there are men and women here—in fact, the majority are women—[*laughter*]—because one of the best measures of a country's success is whether it empowers women and girls. And you're all bound together by a common belief that you have the talent and the drive and the power to improve the lives of your fellow human beings.

So for the last 5 weeks, you've been all across America. You've experienced State legislatures and city councils. You've seen how our day-to-day democracy works. You've worked at nonprofits, learning how to organize and advocate for change. You've interned in some American companies, seeing how to build and manage a business. And I want to thank all of our leaders and partners who are here—we've got universities and academic institutions, we've got businesses—all who have been very generous in their support of this overall process.

So you've been experiencing America. Some of you were very lucky and had a chance to go to my home State of Hawaii. [*Laughter*] I heard—I had that some of you tried to hula dance. [*Laughter*] Some of you went to my hometown of Chicago, and you saw American ingenuity at its best, including, I hear that you saw ATMs that give cupcakes. [*Laughter*]

And I also know that Americans have learned from you as well. They—you shared your culture and traditions and foods. You discovered American foods like Jell-O. [*Laughter*] I hear somebody had Jell-O, which, I was very excited about that. And the friendships and the understanding that you have forged will help to bring our countries together for a long time.

And soon, you'll return home. Each of you has developed a project, an action plan, and you'll take what you've learned here and put it into practice. And we're going to be with you during this process as you build your ventures, expand your networks, and—mentoring young people that are coming behind you. We're going to welcome 500 fellows like you every single year. So this may be the end of your visit to America, but you've really begun this process of building partnerships that will last a lifetime.

And we want you to make sure that you are realizing your dreams. I just want to take a couple of examples. We've got Seth Suonvisal. Where's Seth? Here's Seth. [*Laughter*] So in Cambodia, Seth works with Parliament. So in Tulsa, he witnessed city government at work, the legislative process in Tulsa, Oklahoma. And, Seth, we're proud to be your partner as you strive to ensure that governments deliver for all of the Cambodian people.

We have Muchamad Dafip. Where's Muchamad? There he is. He is an advocate for the environment in Indonesia. *Apa kabar?* And at the East-West Center——

[*At this point, two audience members stood up.*]

There aren't two of you, is there? [*Laughter*] The—so at the East-West Center in Hawaii, he learned new ways to empower citizens and effect change. So we're proud to be your partner. Together, we can promote sustainable development and help our—help the next generation meet the urgent challenges of climate change.

We've got Khine Muang—there's Khine, and—is a doctor in Myanmar where she offers free surgeries to children for cleft palates and lips and gives them a new smile and new confidence. So we're very proud. At the Oklahoma University School of Community Medicine, she focused on ways to expand outreach and free clinics. And we are so proud to be your partner, working for the health and dignity of children across Myanmar. Although, I have to say that you are the youngest doctor I've ever seen. [*Laughter*] I mean, she looks like she's 14. It's very impressive. So thank you.

And where is Pern Phansiri? There's Pern, from Thailand, a tireless fighter against human trafficking. And at the city manager's office in Lee's Summit, Missouri, she saw how a community takes a comprehensive approach to social services. So we're proud to be your partner in standing up for the rights of women and children. We have to end the outrage of human trafficking, and we so appreciate the work that you do.

So this just gives you an example of the incredible talent and commitment that these young people represent. And I want to close with a quick story that captures the spirit of our work together.

Thongvone Sosamphan is here from Laos. Where's—please, stand up. So the—she's here from Laos. In Atlanta, she visited the memorial and center honoring the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. And she was struck by one of

Dr. King's quotes, which says, "Life's most persistent and urgent question is, 'What are you doing for others?'"

And that prompted her to think about the true meaning of leadership. And she wrote something very beautiful that I want everybody to hear. "Leadership is inside you," she said. "Everyone can be a leader, because everybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to lead. You don't need to know more than the others. All you need is a heart full of grace and a soul generated by love." Well, that's pretty good.

So that's what I see in all of you. That's why I believe so strongly that you're going to keep answering that question Dr. King asked: What are you doing for others? That's why I'm confident that all of you will be extraordinary leaders. Already, you're doing great work in your communities and your countries, with hearts full of grace and souls generated by love. And you will continue to have a friend and partner in the United States of America.

So we are very, very proud of you. And with that, let's—I want to hear from you, both questions or you can tell me a story about the exciting food that you've had—[*laughter*]—in all across the country.

So we have some microphones in the audience, right? And what I'll do is, I'll just call on people, and I'll—I'm going to go boy, girl, boy, girl so that it's very fair. [*Laughter*] All right? So we'll start with this young lady here. Please introduce yourself and tell us where you're from.

Malaysia/Democratic Governance

Q. Hi, Mr. President. My name is—[*inaudible*]. I am an elected representative from Malaysia. My question to you is, what is your view on the democracy in Malaysia with the recent jailing of Anwar Ibrahim, the opposition leader, and the crackdown on the oppositions? Thank you.

The President. Well, Malaysia has a history of democracy that has to be preserved. And I have a very good relationship with Prime Minister Najib, and we are close partners and cooperating on a whole host of issues.

I think that Malaysia, like all our countries—not just ASEAN countries, but countries here in the United States—have to recognize that democracy is not just elections, but it's how open and transparent and accountable government is between elections. And it's important that free speech, freedom of the press, an independent judiciary, the right to assemble peacefully—that all those rights are observed to make democracy work. So I—as a general rule, I don't comment on even individual cases in this country, much less some—another country, because I think it's important for the legal system to work.

But I do know that it is important if an opposition leader who is well known has been charged with a crime, that that process of how that is adjudicated and how open it is and how clear the evidence is, that that is all subject to scrutiny. Because what you don't want is a situation in which the legitimacy of the process is questioned. That has an adverse impact on democracy as a whole. And I think we all have to guard against making sure that there's not a chilling effect on potential opposition in government.

So as I always point out, democracy is hard. I mean, I think that many of the things that are said about me are terribly unfair. [*Laughter*] But the reason American democracy has survived for so long is because people—even if they're wrong—have a right to say what they think. George Washington, our first President, he complained terribly about some of the foolishness that was said about him. But part of the reason he is considered one of our greatest Presidents is because he set an example of recognizing that if democracy was to work, then you had to respect the rights of even those people who you disagreed most with, because otherwise, there's no way that a democracy can flourish over the long term.

So these are things that I said publicly when I was in Myanmar. I had—when I was in Malaysia, rather. I had an opportunity to meet with some community activists and civil society leaders there. And this is something that I say everywhere we go. And it's important for America to recognize that we're not perfect, ei-

ther, and so we have to make sure that we are constantly seeing, how do we improve our democracy? I mean, the amounts of money, for example, that are involved in our elections these days is disturbing because it makes it seem as if a few people have more influence in the democracy than the many.

And so I will continue to speak out about these issues, even with friends. Maybe sometimes we are even more willing to say something when it's friends because we know that they can do better. Good. Thank you.

Yes, sir.

Association of Southeast Asian Nations-U.S. Trade/Asian Infrastructure Bank/China/Deforestation in Indonesia and Malaysia/Sustainable Development

Q. Hello, Mr. President. My name is—[*inaudible*]. I am from Indonesia. I am working with Ministry of Finance. My YSEALI theme is economic empowerment. My question is, what is your expectation about economic relationship between United States and ASEAN countries in the future? Thank you.

The President. Well, we already have a very strong economic relationship. As I pointed out, this is a region that is growing fast. It is—it has a big population. You have very hard-working people, entrepreneurial people. I expect it will continue to grow. And the United States wants to be a partner in all sorts of ways.

Trade is the most obvious and important relationship, economically. And so one of the reasons why I think the Trans-Pacific Partnership is so important is because it sets up a set of principles to ensure fair trade between countries. It calls for higher labor standards for all countries, higher environmental standards for all countries. It makes sure that countries are being treated fairly—companies are being treated fairly when they are operating in a foreign market.

And there's the potential, I think, if we get this right and completed in the next few months, to be able to ensure that the United States and ASEAN countries that already have a massive amount of trade, that that's able to increase and that there's more opportunity for everybody. But it's at a high standard rather than a low standard.

Part of the goal for ASEAN countries, most of them are now entering into a stage of development where they don't want to just be sending raw materials to someplace else to have them developed, they want to be creating value starting their own businesses, making sure that they are part of the 21st-century economy. And that requires upgrading skills, education for their populations. We think we can be helpful in those areas.

And we want to encourage high educational levels in ASEAN countries because then it's less likely that workers are exploited. And that means then that you're competing with us because you have the best ideas and the best products, as opposed to just you have the cheapest labor. And if all that ASEAN countries are offering are cheap labor, then what happens is, U.S. workers get hurt and you don't necessarily see an improvement in standards of living for those ASEAN countries.

If everybody is operating at a higher level, then we're all competing on an even playing field, and over time, that will result in more growth and more development in ASEAN countries. But I think it—skills training for—is the most important thing. I think that the power of the Internet to access markets and ideas will be particularly important for ASEAN countries.

Infrastructure is something that still needs to get done. I think there is still underinvestment of infrastructure in that region. I know there was some controversy a while back because China wanted to start an Asia infrastructure bank; we haven't yet signed on to participate.

I want to be very clear. We actually want China to invest in infrastructure in that region. We want to make sure that the investments are actually good for the people in those countries, which means transparency in terms of how decisions are made at this new bank. But we'll continue with the Asian Development Bank and World Bank and other institutions, try to encourage not only investment in human capital, but also the infrastructure that's needed.

And finally, I think sustainability is going to be critical. I worry about the great forests of Indonesia and Malaysia. If those all just become palm oil plantations and deforestation continues at the same pace it has, then the prospects of additional accelerated climate change are very powerful, not to mention the loss of species and biodiversity. The oceans, if you get overfishing, that's a problem; pollution. Given how populated these areas are, it's very important that economic development ties in with sustainable development. Otherwise, I think we'll all have problems. Good.

Okay. [*Laughter*] That's good. So yes, young lady right here.

Q. Mabuhay.

The President. Mabuhay.

The President's Advice to Young Political Leaders

Q. Mabuhay, Mr. President. I'm—[*inaudible*]—a city council member of Davao City, by Philippines. There are a handful—or a there are a few elected officials, some are YSEALI fellows. I really would like to know what is your word of advice for a young, budding political leader, young legislator, elected official like me in a developing democracy like the Philippines? Thank you.

The President. Oh, that's great. Well, the—I think—my first advice is don't be shy, and obviously, you're okay. [*Laughter*] I think you're going to do great.

I think that when I think about my own political career, when I look at other political careers that I admire, I think the most important thing is to have a sense of principles and why you're in public service. I think sometimes people want to be in public service just because they like seeing their name up in lights, they like being important. And that's a bad reason to go into politics. You should be, like, an actress or a singer or make a lot of money.

But if you're going into politics and public service, there's only one good reason to do it, and that is because you want to help people. And you should know what it is that you stand for and what you believe in. It doesn't mean that you won't have to compromise. It doesn't mean that you might not change your mind about an issue as you go forward and you learn more and you have more experience. But you should have something inside of you that says, these are the things that are really important to me that I will not compromise on, all right?

So for me, throughout my political career, even before I was in politics and I was just working as a community organizer, I knew that I wanted to work to create more opportunity for all people; that my orientation was always, how does this help the poor or the marginalized or somebody who has less opportunity than me? How is this going to help them if they work hard to get ahead?

I know that one of the important principles for me has always been treating everybody fairly. So whether that's women or people of different races or different religious faiths or different sexual orientations, that part—one of my core principles is that I will never engage in a politics in which I'm trying to divide people or make them less than me because they look different or have a different religion. That's a core principle. I—that's not something I would violate, right?

So, if you have a clear view of what you stand for, then as you move forward, you'll have setbacks. There will be times where you didn't succeed. There will be times where you're frustrated. There will be times—you might even lose an election sometimes. But at least, you'll know every morning when you wake up and you look at yourself in the mirror, I know who I am and why I'm doing what I'm doing. And I think those are the people who eventually end up having successful careers because people sense that integrity and that leadership. Even if they don't agree with you, at least they know you believe in something.

And unfortunately, too many politicians, they're just climbing the ladder, but they don't know why. And when they get there, then they're not very effective leaders. Or they become much more subject to the temptations of corruption because all they're worried about is I want to hang on to my power, and I'm willing to give up anything in order to stay in power and do anything to stay in power. And that's when you lose your way.

Right? You have to be willing to lose something for your principles. You have to be willing to lose an election because you think that there's something that's more important than you just winning an election. And if you do that now—but you have to—you should try to win. I'm not saying you should try to lose. [*Laughter*] But you have to stand for something. And that's my most important advice.

The gentleman in the gray suit right there. Yes, you.

ASEAN-U.S. Relations/South China Sea Territorial Disputes/Burma

Q. Xin chào kahm uhn. I say in Vietnamese. Thank you. I am—[*inaudible*]. I come from Vietnam. Like many others, I look forward to see you and the First Lady visiting my country, Vietnam, in the near future. I have a question. Mr. President, what do you expect the young people in the Southeast Asian countries doing in dealing with the current challenges to the peace, stability, respect to international law like the—[*inaudible*]—while promoting the cooperation between the 10 countries with others, including especially with the United States? Thank you.

The President. Especially with? I'm sorry, the last part?

Q. Especially with the United States.

The President. Oh, with the United States. Well, look, the—I think that I've seen already significant progress with ASEAN countries over the last 6 years that I've been attending the ASEAN meetings and the East Asia Summit. And I think initially the meetings would oftentimes just be symbolic, and there would be a lot of pleasantries and a lot of meetings and cultural events. But we don't—we didn't always have an agenda. And I think one of the things that you've started to see is people working much more concretely on, what are we trying to accomplish here? How do we develop more capacity, for example, in the region around disaster relief so that if, heaven forbid, there's another typhoon of the sort that we saw in the Philippines, or if in fact, that we see some other natural tragedy, that all the countries' assets can be brought to bear, and we've done the training ahead of time to know who can help and how they can help?

I think the—trying to work on coming up with standards around maritime law is a big challenge. And obviously, there's significant tension right now between many of the ASEAN countries and China, as well as the United States with China, around the South China Sea and how those issues are going to be resolved. ASEAN has been very constructive in trying to put together a code of conduct that all countries should abide by so that disputes around maritime boundaries are resolved through law and a impartial process, rather than just based on who's the biggest. And that, I think, is going to be very important. ASEAN can play an important role in those areas.

Environmental issues I've already mentioned. This is a very fast growing region, and it is important to make sure that there's a lot of cooperation between countries because small fisheries, et cetera—those don't always observe national boundaries. And so working together, you can accomplish more.

And then, human rights issues and democracy issues, reinforcing good habits among the countries is very important. I think it's fair to say that the elections that will be taking place in Myanmar would not have happened if it hadn't been for the good example that Indonesia set with its transition and other ASEAN countries showing the path from military rule towards democracy and how, through all the lessons that have been learned, that could be accomplished. And that, I think, created more space within Myanmar to—and President Thein Sein to feel that this is possible.

So part of the goal here is to make sure that each country is reinforcing the best habits and laws and observing human rights and being critical when one country slips, but in a constructive way that allows for a path to improvement. And I think ASEAN can do that uniquely.

And the United States will be a partner. We have, obviously, bilateral relationships with each of these countries, but we also want to be a partner with the group as a whole to encourage this cooperative model going forward.

Okay. [*Laughter*] Young lady right there, yes. Uh-huh.

The President's Accomplishments

Q. Good afternoon, Mr. President. I'm—[*inaudible*]. I'm from Indonesia. I work as a data analyst in the World Bank Indonesia Country Office. My YSEALI theme is civic engagement. My question to you: Now that your second term in the office is about to end, how do you want the world to remember you? Thank you. [*Laughter*]

The President. Fondly, I hope. [*Laughter*] I still have 20 months in office—[*laughter*]—so I've got a lot of work still to do before I can start thinking about looking backwards. I'm still very much focused on what's in front of me.

But obviously, there are things that I've been proud of. When I came into office, the United States and the world was going through a terrible economic crisis, the worst, really, since the 1930s. And it was hard, but we ended up avoiding a terrible depression. And within a year, the economy was growing again. Here in the United States now, we're back to the precrisis employment levels. Our auto industry was saved. But also, internationally, we averted a much worse crisis because of, in part, the leadership the United States showed, along with international institutions and central banks managing—that was very important. That's an important legacy for me.

I think that the work that I've done to provide health insurance for people here in the United States and to provide more educational opportunity is consistent with the principles that I talked about, the reason I got into politics.

Internationally, we've reinvigorated diplomacy in a whole variety of ways. People don't remember, when I came into office, the United States in world opinion ranked below China and just barely above Russia. And today, once again, the United States is the most respected country on Earth. And part of that, I think, is because of the work that we did to reengage the world and say that we want to work with you as partners with mutual interest and mutual respect. It's on that basis that we were able to end two wars while still focusing on the very real threat of terrorism and to try to work with our partners on the ground in places like Iraq and Afghanistan. It's the reason why we've—are moving in the direction of normalizing relations with Cuba. The nuclear deal that we're trying to negotiate with Iran. Our efforts to help encourage democracy in Myanmar.

I think the people of Myanmar deserve the credit for this new opening. But my visit there didn't hurt in trying to reinforce the possibilities of freedom for 40 million people. And so that direct engagement, the work that we've done to build and strengthen international organizations—including on issues like public health, and the fight against Ebola is just the most recent example of that—I think we've been able to put our international relationships on a very strong footing that allows us then to work more cooperatively with other countries moving forward to meet the important challenges ahead.

But I've still got a lot of work to do. So maybe in 18 months, I'll check back with you, and I'll let you know. [*Laughter*]

Okay. All right. Gentleman right here with the sash.

Burma/Singapore/Economic Development

Q. Hello, Mr. President Obama. I'm from Burma. And firstly, I would like to say hello on behalf of my family. And my question is, I'm working tourism business in Burma, and my question is this: What do you see critical areas in where the U.S. can contribute economic development in Burma? Thank you so much.

The President. Well, Burma, Myanmar, it lost a lot of time over the last 40 years because of the very tight controls on the economy and the discouragement of entrepreneurship and new businesses. I mean, part of the reason why I was so struck when I traveled to Myanmar was, it reminded me of when I first arrived in Indonesia back in 1967, whereas when I go to Jakarta now or Singapore or Bangkok, it looks completely different. This looked like the past.

So there's a lot of catching up to do. The good news is, though, countries that are still at

those early stages of development, they can grow very fast because there's so much pent-up energy and opportunity. And I think the most important thing is going to be establishing rule of law and systems and practices where if you start a business, you can feel confident that you don't have to pay a hundred bribes and you don't have to hire somebody's son, that—and that you can make a profit; that if there's a foreign investor, that they can invest and be treated fairly and that their rights and their intellectual property and their property are protected.

Those basic systems of law, where those are established, those countries can do well because the natural talents of the people and the incredible resources and hard work of the people then pay off.

I mean, you look at Singapore. Right? I mean, Singapore is a tiny, little place. It has really nothing, no resources to speak of. But today, when you travel to Singapore, it is as prosperous as any place in the world. Why is that? Well, part of it is that it set up a set of systems where if businesses were started or investors came in, they knew that they could find a very skilled workforce; they knew that the rules were international-standard rules in terms of operations.

So it will take some time for, I think, Myanmar to move in that direction. But you have your own models even in—among the ASEAN countries. You don't have to look to the United States; you can look at just your—some of your neighbors to see what is required for success. And what the United States will try to do is to provide technical assistance, and we will also try to provide direct assistance, particularly around building skills and education. Because one of the keys is to make sure that you have a workforce that can add value.

That—in the age of the Internet, when companies can locate anywhere, the most important thing is to find someplace where there is security so there's no conflict, where there's rule of law, and the people are highly skilled. And if you have those three things, then people will invest. Okay?

Yes, go ahead. Yes.

Burma's Rohingya Minority/Indonesia/Singapore/Religious, Ethnic, and Gender Equality

Q. Sawadtee khaa. Good afternoon, Mr. President. My name is Pern Phansiri. I'm from Thailand. And now I work on the anti–human trafficking issue in Thailand and neighboring country. So today I would like to ask you, if you were a Rohingya, which country would you prefer to live with and why? [*Laughter*] Thank you so much.

The President. That's an interesting question. Let me speak more broadly, and then I'll answer your question. [*Laughter*]

We were talking earlier about what's required for Myanmar to succeed. I think one of the most important things is to put an end to discrimination against people because of what they look like or what their faith is. And the Rohingya have been discriminated against significantly, and that's part of the reason they're fleeing.

I think if I were a Rohingya, I would want to stay where I was born. I'd want to stay in the land where my parents had lived. But I'd want to make sure that my government was protecting me and that people were treating me fairly. That's what I'd want. And that's why it's so important, I think, as part of the democratic transition, to take very seriously this issue of how the Rohingya are treated.

One of the things about discriminating against people or treating people differently is, by definition, that means that people will treat you differently, and you never know when you will find yourself in a situation in which you are a minority, where you are vulnerable, where you are not being treated fairly. And right now, obviously, our focus is on making sure that those who are being subject to human trafficking and are, in some cases right now, still in a very perilous situation out in the open sea, that they are relocated. I want to commend Indonesia and Malaysia for their willingness to take on thousands of these displaced persons. The United States, as part of our refugee process, will take some. We put over $100 million into—over the last several years in Burma to

make sure that minority groups, including the Rohingya, are protected against.

But ultimately, this is going to be a great test for the democracy of the future. Not just in Burma and Myanmar, but in areas all throughout the country. When I was—and I know this directly because when I was young and I was living in Indonesia, there were times where there were anti-Chinese riots that were very violent and vicious. And in fact, sometimes, the Chinese Indonesians were treated very similarly to how Jewish Europeans were treated in Europe and subject to stereotypes and resentments.

And the truth of the matter is, one of the reasons that Singapore, I mentioned earlier, has been successful, is that it has been able to bring together people who may look different, but they all think of themselves as part of Singapore. And that has to be a strength, not a weakness. But that requires leadership and government being true to those principles.

To their credit, the Indonesian Government when I was growing up was very good about not discriminating on the base of religion, despite the fact that it was 98-percent Muslim. And I think that the tolerance towards other faiths historically in Indonesia has been part of what's contributed to progress there. You haven't seen the same kind of sectarian animosity that you've seen in parts of the Middle East.

But the one thing I know is, countries that divide themselves on racial or religious lines, they do not succeed. They do not succeed. That's rule number one. Rule number two is, nations that suppress their women do not succeed. They don't succeed. Not only is it bad because half of the country is not successful—because they're not getting education and opportunity—but it's women who teach children, which means the children are less educated, if you're not teaching the moms. So there are some—each country is different, but there are some rules, if you look at development patterns around the world, that are pretty consistent. And those are two pretty good rules.

Don't divide yourself on religious and ethnic lines and racial lines. And don't discriminate against women. If you do those two things, you know, you're not guaranteed success, but at least you're not guaranteed failure.

I've got time for one more, two more. I definitely don't have time for 30 more. [*Laughter*] What do you think? What time is it? Two more. I've got time for two more. Okay? It's a gentleman's turn. So. yes, sir. Right there. Yes.

Leadership/U.S. Presidency

Q. Good afternoon, Mr. President. My name is Sreedaran Raman. I'm from Malaysia. I'm working with Department of Irrigation and Drainage in Malaysia. My YSEALI theme is environmental sustainability. And my question for you is, what has you—what have you learned about leadership and life as being President in comparison to what you have might not learned if you were not a President? [*Laughter*]

The President. As President you—I think probably what makes this job unique is that you are the ultimate decisionmaker. So there are other people who work as hard as I do. My staff works very, very hard. They're just as smart or smarter than I am. They care just as much or more than I do. They have wonderful qualities.

But the one thing as President is that ultimately, there's nobody you can pass it on to. Harry Truman, one of our best Presidents, once said, the buck stops here. He meant at his desk. And it's true.

And usually by the time a decision comes to my desk, you know that it's a very hard problem because if it was easy, somebody else would have solved it. And so the—probably the thing that I uniquely have had to learn in the Presidency that is—I hadn't learned as well in other jobs is the ability to look at all the information that you have, listen to all the advice that's there, and the different viewpoints that may exist about an issue, to try to make a decision based not on what is easiest, but what I think is the best long-term solution; and then feel comfortable in the knowledge that I may be wrong and that there will be significant consequences if I am wrong, to have to have the courage then, maybe 6 months later or a year later, to admit this didn't work and then to try something new.

But being willing to take responsibility for making hard decisions, not being paralyzed because you know there are big consequences to them, and then being able to adapt based on the evidence as to whether it worked or not I think is the most important lesson I've learned. And that's not something that you have to—is just unique to being President.

I think in whatever your job is, you should be willing to take responsibility for getting the best information and to listening to everybody, but then, you have to just—you have to make a decision and understand then that you have to continue to evaluate it. And I think that that's been very important.

The second lesson, which is something that you just learn more of as President, but all of you have already learned in some ways in your work, is to surround yourself with the best people. Your most important job is to create a team of people, some of whom have talents that you don't have, to make up for your weaknesses; and then to want to make them better and make them successful.

Because if they're successful, then the team is successful. So you're not a good leader if you don't want somebody who is smarter than you because you think, oh, well, maybe they'll shine more than you do. Then, you're not a very good leader, because your team won't succeed.

So I'm always looking for—who are people who are much smarter than me, or much more organized than I am, or much better analysts? And my job then is just to be able to weave them together so they're all working together effectively. And if you're doing that, then you're a good leader. And you should be constantly thinking, how can I help this person do their jobs even better?

And the good news is, if you do that and people recognize that you care about them being successful, then they'll work harder, and they'll want to do even better. And they'll appreciate you because they know that you're helping them, instead of trying to keep them subordinate to you.

All right. Last question. And it's—all the men should put down their hands because it's a woman's turn. [*Laughter*] Oh, no, all the guys have to put their hands down. This young lady in the yellow right here, right in the corner, right here. Yes.

South China Sea Territorial Disputes/China

Q. Thank you, President. Good afternoon, sir. My name is Tram Bui, and I'm from Vietnam. Currently, I'm working for the Da Nang Institute for Socio-Economic Development. And first of all, I would like to say thank you to you for giving us this unique opportunity to come to the United States and to meet you today. My question for you is, what is your opinion about disputes and China's action in the East Sea or so-called the South China Seas?

The President. Well, as I already mentioned, what has allowed all of Asia to prosper over the last two, three decades—including China—is, there's been relative peace and stability, freedom of navigation, freedom of commerce. And all of that has been underwritten, all of that has been because there have been certain rules that everybody has followed. Freedom of navigation requires that people observe basic conduct about, this far off, your territory is your territory; after that, you're—it's international waters. If there's a dispute, then there's international mechanisms to adjudicate that dispute.

If you start losing that approach and suddenly conflicts arise and claims are made based on how big the country is or how powerful its navy is instead of based on law, then I think Asia will be less prosperous and the Pacific region will be less prosperous. And that's why we've said directly to China and to other claimant countries, we don't have a claim to these areas. We're not parties in the dispute. But we do have a stake in making sure that they are resolved peacefully, diplomatically, and in accordance with internationally established standards.

And for that reason, we think that land reclamation, aggressive actions by any party in that area are counterproductive. And we will continue as a Asia-Pacific power to support all countries who are prepared to work with us to establish and enforce norms and rules that can

continue growth and prosperity in the region. And the truth is, is that China is going to be successful. It's big, it's powerful. Its people are talented, and they work hard. And it may be that some of their claims are legitimate, but they shouldn't just try to establish that based on throwing elbows and pushing people out of the way. If in fact their claims are legitimate, people will recognize them.

I will say this, though, that I am very confident, much more confident, in the future of Southeast Asia, the Asia-Pacific, and the world, because I've had the opportunity to spend time with you. I think all of you are going to do outstanding work. And I want to make sure that you know that not only will this administration and the United States Government continue to support the work that you do, but I personally, even after I leave office, will continue to have a great interest in seeing not only you succeed, but those coming behind you, young people like yourselves, succeed. And I think you should be interested in making sure to promote YSEALI and the network and try to provide similar opportunities to other young people as you become more important in whatever your fields are in the future. All right?

Congratulations. Good luck.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:26 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Zin Mar Myint, fellow, Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative; and King Phumiphon Adunyadet of Thailand.

Remarks on Presenting Posthumously the Medal of Honor to Private Henry Johnson and Sergeant William Shemin
June 2, 2015

The President. Good morning, everybody. Please be seated.

Audience members. Good morning.

The President. Welcome to the White House. Nearly a hundred years ago, a 16-year-old kid from the Midwest named Frank Buckles headed to Europe's western front. An ambulance driver, he carried the wounded to safety. He lived to see our troops ship off to another war in Europe and one in Korea, Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan. And Frank Buckles became a quietly powerful advocate for our veterans and remained that way until he passed away 4 years ago, America's last surviving veteran of World War I.

On the day Frank was laid to rest in Arlington National Cemetery, Vice President Biden and I went to pay our respects. And we weren't alone. Americans from across the country came out to express their gratitude as well. They were of different ages and different races, some military, some not. Most had never met Frank. But all of them braved a cold winter's day to offer a final tribute to a man with whom they shared a powerful conviction: that no one who serves our country should ever be forgotten.

We are a nation, a people, who remember our heroes. We take seriously our responsibilities to only send them when war is necessary. We strive to care for them and their families when they come home. We never forget their sacrifice. And we believe that it's never too late to say thank you. That's why we're here this morning.

Today America honors two of her sons who served in World War I, nearly a century ago. These two soldiers were roughly the same age, dropped into the battlefields of France at roughly the same time. They both risked their own lives to save the lives of others. They both left us decades ago, before we could give them the full recognition that they deserved. But it's never too late to say thank you. Today we present America's highest military decoration, the Medal of Honor, to Private Henry Johnson and Sergeant William Shemin.

I want to begin by welcoming and thanking everyone who made this day possible: family, friends, admirers. Some of you have worked for years to honor these heroes, to give them

the honor they should have received a long time ago. We are grateful that you never gave up. We are appreciative of your efforts.

As a young man, Henry Johnson joined millions of other African Americans on the Great Migration from the rural South to the industrial North, a people in search of a better life. He landed in Albany, where he mixed sodas at a pharmacy, worked in a coal yard and as a porter at a train station. And when the United States entered World War I, Henry enlisted. He joined one of only a few units that he could: the all-Black 369th Infantry Regiment. The Harlem Hellfighters. And soon, he was headed overseas.

At the time, our military was segregated. Most Black soldiers served in labor battalions, not combat units. But General Pershing sent the 369th to fight with the French Army, which accepted them as their own. Quickly, the Hellfighters lived up to their name. And in the early hours of May 15, 1918, Henry Johnson became a legend.

His battalion was in Northern France, tucked into a trench. Some slept, but he couldn't. Henry and another soldier, Needham Roberts, stood sentry along no man's land. In the predawn, it was pitch black and silent. And then, a click, the sound of wire cutters.

A German raiding party—at least a dozen soldiers, maybe more—fired a hail of bullets. Henry fired back until his rifle was empty. Then he and Needham threw grenades. Both of them were hit. Needham lost consciousness. Two enemy soldiers began to carry him away while another provided cover, firing at Henry. But Henry refused to let them take his brother-in-arms. He shoved another magazine into his rifle. It jammed. He turned the gun around and swung it at one of the enemy, knocking him down. Then, he grabbed the only weapon he had left, his Bolo knife, and went to rescue Needham. Henry took down one enemy soldier, then the other. The soldier he'd knocked down with his rifle recovered, and Henry was wounded again. But armed with just his knife, Henry took him down too.

And finally, reinforcements arrived, and the last enemy soldier fled. As the Sun rose, the scale of what happened became clear. In just a few minutes of fighting, two Americans had defeated an entire raiding party. And Henry Johnson saved his fellow soldier from being taken prisoner.

Henry became one of our most famous soldiers of the war. His picture was printed on recruitment posters and ads for Victory War Stamps. Former President Teddy Roosevelt wrote that he was one of the bravest men in the war. In 1919, Henry rode triumphantly in a victory parade. Crowds lined Fifth Avenue for miles, cheering this American soldier.

Henry was one of the first Americans to receive France's highest award for valor. But his own Nation didn't award him anything—not even the Purple Heart, though he had been wounded 21 times. Nothing for his bravery, though he had saved a fellow soldier at great risk to himself. His injuries left him crippled. He couldn't find work. His marriage fell apart. And in his early thirties, he passed away.

Now, America can't change what happened to Henry Johnson. We can't change what happened to too many soldiers like him, who went uncelebrated because our Nation judged them by the color of their skin and not the content of their character. But we can do our best to make it right. In 1996, President Clinton awarded Henry Johnson a Purple Heart. And today, 97 years after his extraordinary acts of courage and selflessness, I'm proud to award him the Medal of Honor.

We are honored to be joined today by some very special guests: veterans of Henry's regiment, the 369th. Thank you, to each of you, for your service. And I would ask Command Sergeant Major Louis Wilson of the New York National Guard to come forward and accept this medal on Private Johnson's behalf.

[*At this point, Lt. Cmdr. Jillian C. Malzone, USCG, Coast Guard Aide to the President, read the citation, and the President presented the medal, assisted by Maj. Wesley N. Spurlock III, USAF, Air Force Aide to the President.*]

The President. Growing up in Bayonne, New Jersey, William Shemin loved sports: football, wrestling, boxing, swimming. If it

required physical and mental toughness, if it made your heart pump, your muscles ache, he was all in. [*Laughter*] As a teenager, he even played semi-pro baseball. So when America entered the war and posters asked if he was tough enough, there was no question about it, he was going to serve. Too young to enlist? No problem. He puffed his chest and lied about his age. [*Laughter*] And that's how William Shemin joined the 47th Infantry Regiment, 4th Division, and shipped out for France.

On August 7, 1918, on the western front, the Allies were hunkered down in one trench, the Germans in another, separated by about 150 yards of open space, just a football field and a half. But that open space was a bloodbath. Soldier after soldier ventured out, and soldier after soldier was mowed down. So those still in the trenches were left with a terrible choice: die trying to rescue your fellow soldier or watch him die, knowing that part of you will die along with him.

William Shemin couldn't stand to watch. He ran out into the hell of no man's land and dragged a wounded comrade to safety. And then, he did it again and again. Three times, he raced through heavy machine gunfire. Three times, he carried his fellow soldiers to safety.

The battle stretched on for days. Eventually, the platoon's leadership broke down. Too many officers had become casualties. So William stepped up and took command. He reorganized the depleted squads. Every time there was a lull in combat, he led rescues of the wounded. As a lieutenant later described it, William was "cool, calm, intelligent, and personally utterly fearless." That young kid who lied about his age grew up fast in war. And he received accolades for his valor, including the Distinguished Service Cross.

When he came home, William went to school for forestry and began a nursery business in the Bronx. It was hard work, lots of physical labor, just like he liked it. He married a red-head, blue-eyed woman named Bertha Schiffer, and they had three children who gave them 14 grandchildren. He bought a house upstate, where the grandkids spent their summers swimming and riding horses. He taught them how to salute. [*Laughter*] He taught them the correct way to raise the flag every morning and lower and fold it every night. He taught them how to be Americans.

William stayed in touch with his fellow veterans too. And when World War II came, William went and talked to the Army about signing up again. [*Laughter*] By then, his war injuries had given him a terrible limp. But he treated that limp just like he treated his age all those years ago. Pay no attention to that, he said. He knew how to build roads, he knew camouflage; maybe there was a place for him in this war too. To Bertha's great relief, the Army said that the best thing William could do for his country was to keep running his business and take care of his family. [*Laughter*]

His daughter Elsie—who's here today with what seems like a platoon of Shermans—Shemins—[*laughter*]—was a—has a theory about what drove her father to serve. He was the son of Russian immigrants, and he was devoted to his Jewish faith. "His family lived through the pogroms," she says. "They saw towns destroyed and children killed. And then, they came to America. And here they found a haven, a home, success. And my father and his sister both went to college. All that in one generation. That's what America meant to him. And that's why he'd do anything for this country."

Well, Elsie, as much as America meant to your father, he means even more to America. It takes our Nation too long sometimes to say so, because Sergeant Shemin served at a time when the contributions and heroism of Jewish Americans in uniform were too often overlooked. But William Shemin saved American lives. He represented our Nation with honor. And so it is my privilege, on behalf of the American people, to make this right and finally award the Medal of Honor to Sergeant William Shemin. I want to invite his daughters Elsie and Ina—86 and 83, and gorgeous—[*laughter*]—to accept this medal on their father's behalf.

[*Lt. Cmdr. Malzone read the citation, and the President presented the medal, assisted by Maj. Spurlock.*]

The President. Well, it has taken a long time for Henry Johnson and William Shemin to re-

ceive the recognition they deserve. And there are surely others whose heroism is still unacknowledged and uncelebrated. So we have work to do, as a nation, to make sure that all of our heroes' stories are told. And we'll keep at it, no matter how long it takes. America is the country we are today because of people like Henry and William, Americans who signed up to serve and rose to meet their responsibilities and then went beyond. The least we can do is to say: We know who you are. We know what you did for us. We are forever grateful.

May God bless the fallen of all of our wars. May He watch over our veterans and their families and all those who serve today. May God bless the United States of America.

With that, I'd ask Chaplain to return to the podium for a benediction.

[*Maj. Gen. Paul K. Hurley, USA, Army Chief of Chaplains, said a prayer.*]

The President. Amen. With that, we conclude the formal ceremony. But I welcome everybody to join in a wonderful reception. And let's give our Medal of Honor winners one big round of applause.

Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:27 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Ina Bass and Elsie Shemin-Roth, daughters of Sgt. Shemin. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the reading of the citations.

Statement on Congressional Passage of the USA FREEDOM Act
June 2, 2015

For the past 18 months, I have called for reforms that better safeguard the privacy and civil liberties of the American people while ensuring our national security officials retain tools important to keeping Americans safe. That is why, today, I welcome the Senate's passage of the USA FREEDOM Act, which I will sign when it reaches my desk.

After a needless delay and inexcusable lapse in important national security authorities, my administration will work expeditiously to ensure our national security professionals again have the full set of vital tools they need to continue protecting the country. Just as important, enactment of this legislation will strengthen civil liberty safeguards and provide greater public confidence in these programs, including by prohibiting bulk collection through the use of section 215, FISA pen registers, and national security letters and by providing the American people with additional transparency measures.

I am gratified that Congress has finally moved forward with this sensible reform legislation. I particularly applaud Senators Leahy and Lee as well as Representatives Goodlatte, Sensenbrenner, Conyers, and Nadler for their leadership and tireless efforts to pass this important bipartisan legislative achievement.

NOTE: The statement referred to H.R. 2048.

Memorandum on Creating a Preference for Meat and Poultry Produced According to Responsible Antibiotic-Use Policies
June 2, 2015

Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies

Subject: Creating a Preference for Meat and Poultry Produced According to Responsible Antibiotic-Use Policies

Antibiotics support nearly all of modern medicine—including care for premature babies, cancer patients, and people who need

surgery. Yet, overuse and misuse can reduce the effectiveness of these miracle drugs. Antibiotic resistance—when bacteria change so that they are able to grow in the presence of an antibiotic that would normally kill them or limit their growth—threatens to return us to a time when many people died from common infections, posing a serious threat to public health and the economy. Reducing antibiotic resistance will require stewardship practices in the use of antibiotics in medical and agricultural settings, including eliminating the practice of feeding medically important antibiotics to food-producing animals for growth promotion.

It is the policy of the Federal Government to encourage responsible uses of medically important antibiotics in the meat and poultry supply chain by supporting the emerging market for meat that has been produced according to responsible antibiotic-use policies. This policy will build on the important work of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and antibiotic manufacturers, which are already taking substantial steps to phase out the use of medically important antibiotics in food animals.

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, and to protect the health of the American people, I hereby direct as follows:

Section 1. Making Available in Certain Federal Cafeterias Meat and Poultry Produced According to Responsible Antibiotic-Use Policies. The Administrator of General Services, in consultation with the Secretary of Agriculture, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, and the Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), shall take the following steps to make meat and poultry produced according to responsible antibiotic-use policies available in Federal cafeterias that the General Services Administration (GSA) manages (GSA cafeterias):

(a) within 120 days of the date of this memorandum, GSA shall initiate a process in which vendors, under new contract awards (including renewals), offer in GSA cafeterias, as an option, meat and poultry from animals that have been raised according to responsible antibiotic-use policies, to the extent such an option is available and cost effective.

(b) In conducting this effort, GSA shall:

(i) take steps to minimize price impact through:

(A) using competitive procedures, consistent with law, in the selection of vendors; and

(B) continuing to make available alternative food options, in addition to meat and poultry from animals that have been raised according to responsible antibiotic-use policies;

(ii) work to develop, for inclusion in food-service contracts in GSA cafeterias, appropriate contractual requirements to verify that vendors are providing meat and poultry produced according to responsible antibiotic-use policies;

(iii) analyze, in consultation with the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Health and Human Services, customer demand, product supply, and market prices; and

(iv) ensure that GSA cafeteria vendors appropriately identify meat and poultry items from animals that have been raised according to responsible antibiotic-use policies.

(c) For 3 years after the initiation of the process described in this section, GSA shall report annually on the customer demand, product supply, and market prices of meat and poultry produced according to responsible antibiotic-use policies to the Director of OMB and the Task Force for Combating Antibiotic-Resistant Bacteria (Task Force) established by Executive Order 13676 of September 18, 2014.

(d) During this 3-year period, executive departments and agencies (agencies) that contract for food in their own cafeterias and make meat and poultry produced according to responsible antibiotic-use policies available in their own cafeterias, may choose to similarly submit customer demand, product supply, and market price information to the Director of OMB and the Task Force, subject to the re-

quirements of this section and under their own authorities.

Sec. 2. Broadening the Availability of Meat and Poultry Produced According to Responsible Antibiotic-Use Policies in Federal Cafeterias. By 2020, each agency shall develop and implement a strategy that creates a preference for awarding contracts to vendors that offer, as an option, meat and poultry produced according to responsible antibiotic-use policies for sale in domestic Federal cafeterias to civilian Federal employees and visitors, to the extent such an option is available and cost effective. In furtherance of this requirement, I hereby direct that:

(a) The Task Force shall:

(i) on an ongoing basis, review the data received pursuant to section 1 of this memorandum as it becomes available and, considering such data and other relevant data sources, conduct an ongoing analysis of the customer demand, product supply, and market prices of meat and poultry produced according to responsible antibiotic-use policies; and

(ii) develop a recommended strategy for creating the preference described in the opening paragraph of this section.

(b) Agencies operating cafeterias in the United States for the primary purpose of serving civilian employees and visitors shall:

(i) consider the recommended strategy developed by the Task Force and, subject to their own authorities, develop a strategy that creates a preference as described in the opening paragraph of this section; and

(ii) implement the strategy developed under section 2(b)(i) of this memorandum for poultry by 2018 and for meats by 2020.

Sec. 3. Developing a Strategy for Federal Acquisition of Meat and Poultry Produced According to Responsible Antibiotic-Use Policies. (a) The Task Force shall recommend a strategy for consideration by the Federal Acquisition Regulatory Council (FAR Council) for applying a preference in Federal acquisitions for meat and poultry produced according to responsible antibiotic-use policies served or sold in all Federal facilities. The strategy shall include criteria for appropriate exceptions, including exceptions to ensure acquisitions of such products can be made at fair and reasonable prices and within a reasonable timeframe.

(b) By 2020, to the extent permitted by law, the FAR Council shall issue a proposed rule to amend the Federal Acquisition Regulation to implement a preference, with appropriate exceptions, for acquisitions of meat and poultry produced according to responsible antibiotic-use policies served or sold in all Federal facilities.

Sec. 4. Definitions. (a) "Medically important antibiotics" shall have the meaning it is given in FDA's Guidance for Industry (GFI) 213, Appendix A.

(b) "Responsible antibiotic-use policies," such as FDA GFI 209 and 213, are those policies under which meat and poultry producers use medically important antibiotics only under veterinary oversight and only when needed to prevent, control, and treat disease—but not for growth promotion.

Sec. 5. General Provisions. (a) This memorandum shall be implemented consistent with applicable law, including international trade obligations, and subject to the availability of appropriations.

(b) Nothing in this memorandum shall be construed to impair or otherwise affect:

(i) the authority granted by law to a department, agency, or the head thereof; or

(ii) the functions of the Director of OMB relating to budgetary, administrative, or legislative proposals.

(c) This memorandum is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by any party against the United States, its departments, agencies, or entities, its officers, employees, or agents, or any other person.

BARACK OBAMA

Remarks Honoring the 2014 World Series Champion San Francisco Giants
June 4, 2015

Hello, everybody! Have a seat, have a seat. Welcome to the White House. For these folks, I guess, it's welcome back. [*Laughter*] This is the third time in the last 5 years: the world champion San Francisco Giants!

We have a lot of Giants fans in the house. We've got some Members of Congress, including Leader Nancy Pelosi. Mayor Lee is here. The outstanding CEO of the Giants, Larry Baer. I am particularly honored to have a couple of trailblazing Hall of Famers here: Monte Irvin and the "Say Hey Kid," Willie Mays. And of course, we've got a manager who seems to be making his own case for Cooperstown, Bruce Bochy.

So this is quite a crew that we've got up here. They have won three titles in 5 years, probably only matched soon by the white—by the Blackhawks, who are—but that's hockey, so I'll—[*laughter*]. This is the first National League team in almost 70 years to do that. They have not lost a playoff series since 2003. And they're doing it all at a time when we've got more playoff teams than ever, more parity than we've seen in a long time. I mean, even the Cubs have a shot this year. [*Laughter*] And I continue to hold out hope that my White Sox can turn it around.

But all that parity seems to wipe away whenever the Giants make the playoffs. I mean, the truth is, it seems like if they get in, they'll probably win it. [*Laughter*] They've got that "even year" magic. They've got that championship experience. I seem to be good luck for them. [*Laughter*] Apparently. And I guess they do have one other thing: Madison Bumgarner. [*Applause*] They've got Madison.

So last October, Madison put together a string of performances that I think is pretty hard to believe, and I'm not talking about his locker room celebrations. [*Laughter*] Twenty-five years old and is already one of the best pitchers in postseason history. For his career, he's 4 and 0 with a 0.25 ERA in the World Series. Last year, he set a new record for postseason innings pitched.

And of course, there's Game 7, which is what kids in their backyards dream about. Madison comes in from the bullpen on just 2 days' rest after throwing a complete game shutout in Game 5. Throws five more scoreless innings to wrap up the title with one of the greatest performances in World Series history. As a courtesy to my Press Secretary, Josh Earnest, I won't mention the team he beat. [*Laughter*] He's from Kansas City, but—[*laughter*].

But you can't win a World Series—or you certainly can't win three of them—just with one guy. The Giants have those pillars that all great teams have. Buster Posey. Matt Cain. Tim Lincecum couldn't be here today, but obviously has made an enormous contribution. The Core Four out of the bullpen.

And then there are guys like Yusmeiro Petit, who set a world League record by retiring 46 consecutive batters during the season. Veteran All-Star Tim Hudson. Joe Panik, a rookie last year. And of course, we've got Hunter Pence. I told Hunter I was going to talk about him a little bit. He was not only named to the All-Star team, he inspired a craze of signs from opposing fans like "Hunter Pence eats pizza with a fork," "Hunter Pence likes Godfather 3." [*Laughter*] Not everybody would have laughed at those signs, but not everybody is Hunter Pence. [*Laughter*]

So it was another great season for the Giants. But what's best about this organization is the example they set off the field. Their Junior Giants program works to get our young people active, teaches them skills like self-esteem and teamwork and leadership. They've given out nearly $500,000 in scholarships to students.

Today I'm proud to announce that the Giants Community Fund is teaming up with San Francisco State University and Major League Baseball to build a multimillion-dollar Junior Giants Urban Youth Academy, complete with training facilities, classrooms, batting cages, two baseball fields.

The academy will target boys and girls from underserved areas of San Francisco and will in-

clude mentoring and tutoring and college prep programming. It's the kind of initiative that fits right in with the goals of our "My Brother's Keeper" initiative to keep all of our young people out of trouble and give them the opportunity to stretch as far as their dreams will take them. And it builds on the work that Major League Baseball is already doing to lift up young people in communities like Compton and New Orleans and right here in Washington, DC.

So it's a tremendous commitment from a tremendous team. Congratulations, everybody. Good luck this year. We're proud of you. Everybody, give a big round of applause. San Francisco Giants. Hey!

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:25 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Edwin M. Lee of San Francisco, CA; Monford M. "Monte" Irvin, former left fielder, New York Giants; and Willie H. Mays, Jr., former center fielder, Gerald D. "Buster" Posey, catcher, Matt Cain, Timothy L. Lincecum, Jeremy Affeldt, Javier Lopez, Sergio Romo, Santiago Casilla, Yusmeiro A. Petit, and Timothy A. Hudson, pitchers, Joseph M. Panik, second baseman, and Hunter A. Pence, outfielder, San Francisco Giants.

The President's Weekly Address
June 6, 2015

Hi, everybody. One of the remarkable things about America is that nearly all of our families originally came from someplace else. We're a nation of immigrants. It's a source of our strength and something we all can take pride in. And this month, Immigrant Heritage Month, is a chance to share our American stories.

I think about my grandparents in Kansas, where they met and where my mom was born. Their family tree reaches back to England and Ireland and elsewhere. They lived and raised me by basic values: working hard, giving back, and treating others the way you want to be treated.

I think of growing up in Hawaii, a place enriched by people of different backgrounds: native Hawaiian, Filipino, Japanese, Chinese, Portuguese, and just about everything else. Growing up in that vibrant mix helped shape who I am today. And while my father was not an immigrant himself, my own life journey as an African American and the heritage shared by Michelle and our daughters, some of whose ancestors came here in chains, has made our family who we are.

This month, I'm inviting you to share your story too. Just visit whitehouse.gov/new-americans. We want to hear how you or your family made it to America, whether you're an immigrant yourself or your great-great-grandparents were.

Of course, we can't just celebrate this heritage, we have to defend it by fixing our broken immigration system. Nearly 2 years ago, Democrats and Republicans in the Senate came together to do that. They passed a commonsense bill to secure our border, get rid of backlogs, and give undocumented immigrants who are already living here a pathway to citizenship if they paid a fine, paid their taxes, and went to the back of the line. But for nearly 2 years, Republican leaders in the House have refused to even allow a vote on it.

That's why, in the meantime, I'm going to keep doing everything I can to make our immigration system more just and more fair. Last fall, I took action to provide more resources for border security; focus enforcement on the real threats to our security; modernize the legal immigration system for workers, employers, and students; and bring more undocumented immigrants out of the shadows so they can get right with the law. Some folks are still fighting against these actions. I'm going to keep fighting for them. Because the law is on our side, it's the right thing to do, and it will make America stronger.

I want us to remember people like Ann Dermody from Alexandria, Virginia. She's originally

from Ireland and has lived in America legally for years. She worked hard, played by the rules, and dreamed of becoming a citizen. In March, her dream came true. And before taking the oath, she wrote me a letter. "The papers we receive . . . will not change our different accents [or] skin tones," Ann said. "But for that day, at least, we'll feel like we have arrived."

Well, to Ann and immigrants like her who have come to our shores seeking a better life: Yes, you have arrived. And by sharing our stories and staying true to our heritage as a nation of immigrants, we can keep that dream alive for generations to come.

Thanks, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 11:55 a.m. on June 5 in the Map Room at the White House for broadcast on June 6. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 5, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on June 6.

Eulogy at the Funeral Service for Joseph R. "Beau" Biden III in Wilmington, Delaware

June 6, 2015

"A man," wrote an Irish poet, "is original when he speaks the truth that has always been known to all good men." Beau Biden was an original. He was a good man, a man of character, a man who loved deeply and was loved in return.

Your Eminences, your Excellencies, General Odierno, distinguished guests; to Hallie, Natalie, and Hunter; to Hunter, Kathleen, Ashley, Howard; the rest of Beau's beautiful family, friends, colleagues; to Jill and to Joe: We are here to grieve with you, but more importantly, we are here because we love you.

Without love, life can be cold and it can be cruel. Sometimes, cruelty is deliberate: the action of bullies or bigots or the inaction of those indifferent to another's pain. But often, cruelty is simply born of life, a matter of fate or God's will, beyond our mortal powers to comprehend. To suffer such faceless, seemingly random cruelty can harden the softest hearts or shrink the sturdiest. It can make one mean or bitter or full of self-pity. Or, to paraphrase an old proverb, it can make you beg for a lighter burden.

But if you're strong enough, it can also make you ask God for broader shoulders, shoulders broad enough to bear not only your own burdens, but the burdens of others; shoulders broad enough to shield those who need shelter the most.

To know Beau Biden is to know which choice he made in his life. To know Joe and the rest of the Biden family is to understand why Beau lived the life he did. For Beau, a cruel twist of fate came early: the car accident that took his mom and his sister and confined Beau and Hunter, then still toddlers, to hospital beds at Christmastime.

But Beau was a Biden. And he learned early the Biden family rule: If you have to ask for help, it's too late. It meant you were never alone; you don't even have to ask, because someone is always there for you when you need them.

And so, after the accident, Aunt Valerie rushed in to care for the boys and remained to help raise them. Joe continued public service, but shunned the parlor games of Washington, choosing instead the daily commute home, maintained for decades, that would let him meet his most cherished duty: to see his kids off to school, to kiss them at night, to let them know that the world was stable and that there was firm ground under their feet.

As Joe himself confessed to me, he did not just do this because the kids needed him, he did it because he needed those kids. And somehow, Beau sensed that: how understandably and deeply hurt his family and his father was. And so rather than use his childhood trauma as justification for a life of self-pity or self-centeredness, that very young boy made a very

grownup decision: He would live a life of meaning. He would live a life for others. He would ask God for broader shoulders.

Beau would guide and look out for his younger brother. He would embrace his new mom—apparently, the two boys sheepishly asking their father when they could all marry Jill—[*laughter*]—and throughout his life, no one would make Jill laugh harder. He would look after their baby sister Ashley. He would forever be the one to do the right thing, careful not to give his family or his friends cause for concern.

Now, it's no secret that a lot of what made Beau the way he was, was just how much he loved and admired his dad. He studied law, like his dad, even choosing the same law school. He chased public service, like his dad, believing it to be a noble and important pursuit. From his dad, he learned how to get back up when life knocked him down. He learned that he was no higher than anybody else and no lower than anybody else, something Joe got from his mom, by the way. And he learned how to make everybody else feel like we matter, because his dad taught him that everybody matters.

He even looked and sounded like Joe, although, I think Joe would be first to acknowledge that Beau was an upgrade—[*laughter*]—Joe 2.0. [*Laughter*] But as much as Beau reminded folks of Joe, he was very much his own man. He was an original.

Here was a scion of an incredible family who brushed away the possibility of privilege for the harder, better reward of earning his own way. Here was a soldier who dodged glory and exuded true humility, a prosecutor who defended the defenseless, the rare politician who collected more fans than foes, and the rarer public figure who prioritized his private life above all else.

Beau didn't cut corners. He turned down an appointment to be Delaware's attorney general so he could win it fair and square. When the field was clear for him to run for the Senate, he chose to finish his job as AG instead. He didn't do these things to gain favor with a cynical public. It's just who he was. You know, in his twenties, he and a friend were stopped for speeding outside Scranton. And the officer recognized the name on the license, and because he was a fan of Joe's work with law enforcement, he wanted to let Beau off with a warning. But Beau made him write that ticket. Beau didn't trade on his name.

After 9/11, he joined the National Guard. He felt it was his obligation, part of what those broader shoulders are for. He did his duty to his country and deployed to Iraq, and General Odierno eloquently spoke to Major Biden's service. What I can tell you is, when he was loading up to ship out at Dover, there was a lot of press that wanted to interview him. Beau refused. He was just another soldier.

I saw him when I visited Iraq; he conducted himself the same way. His deployment was hard on Hallie and the kids, like it was for so many families over the last 14 years. It was hard on Joe, hard on Jill. It's partly why Jill threw herself into her work with military families with so much intensity. That's how you know when Joe thunders, "May God protect our troops," in every speech he does, he means it so deeply.

Like his father, Beau did not have a mean bone in his body. The cruelty he'd endured in his life didn't make him hard, it made him compassionate, empathetic. But it did make him abhor bullies.

Beau's grandfather, Joe's father, believed that the most egregious sin was to abuse your power to inflict pain on another. So Beau squared his broad shoulders to protect people from that kind of abuse. He fought for homeowners who were cheated, seniors who were scammed. He even went after bullying itself. He set up a Child Protector—Predator Task Force, convicted more than 200 of those who targeted vulnerable children. And in all this, he did it in a way that was alive to the suffering of others, bringing in experts to help spare both the children and their parents further trauma.

That's who Beau was: someone who cared, someone who charmed you and disarmed you and put you at ease. When he'd have to attend a fancy fundraiser with people who took themselves way too seriously, he'd walk over to you

and whisper something wildly inappropriate in your ear. [*Laughter*] The son of a Senator, a major in the Army, the most popular elected official in Delaware—I'm sorry, Joe—[*laughter*]—but he was not above dancing in nothing but a sombrero and shorts at Thanksgiving; it would shake loose a laugh from the people he loved. And through it all, he was the consummate public servant, a notebook in his back pocket at all times so he could write down the problems of everyone he met and go back to the office to get them fixed.

Because he was a Biden, the titles that come with family—husband, father, son, brother, uncle—those were the ones Beau valued above any other. This was a man who, at the Democratic National Convention, didn't spend all his time in backrooms with donors or glad-handing. Instead, he rode the escalators in the arena with his son, up and down, up and down, again and again—[*laughter*]—knowing, just like Joe had learned, what ultimately mattered in life.

You know, anyone can make a name for themselves in this reality TV age, especially in today's politics. If you're loud enough or controversial enough, you can get some attention. But to make that name mean something, to have it associated with dignity and integrity, that is rare. There's no shortcut to get it. It's not something you can buy. But if you do right by your children, maybe you can pass it on. And what greater inheritance is there? What greater inheritance than to be part of a family that passes on the values of what it means to be a great parent; that passes on the values of what it means to be a true citizen; that passes on the values of what it means to give back, fully and freely, without expecting anything in return?

That's what our country was built on, men like Beau. That's who built it, families like this. We don't have kings or queens or lords. We don't have to be born into money to have an impact. We don't have to step on one another to be successful. We have this remarkable privilege of being able to earn what we get out of life, with the knowledge that we are no higher than anybody else or lower than anybody else. We know this not just because it is in our founding documents, but because families like the Bidens have made it so, because people like Beau have made it so.

He did in 46 years what most of us couldn't do in 146. He left nothing in the tank. He was a man who led a life where the means were as important as the ends. And the example he set made you want to be a better dad or a better son or a better brother or sister, better at your job, the better soldier. He made you want to be a better person. Isn't that finally the measure of a man, the way he lives, how he treats others, no matter what life may throw at him?

We do not know how long we've got here. We don't know when fate will intervene. We cannot discern God's plan. What we do know is that with every minute that we've got, we can live our lives in a way that takes nothing for granted. We can love deeply. We can help people who need help. We can teach our children what matters and pass on empathy and compassion and selflessness. We can teach them to have broad shoulders.

To the Biden family, this sprawling, intimate clan, I know that Beau's passing has left a gaping void in the world. Hallie, I can only imagine the burdens that you've been carrying on your shoulders these past couple of years. And it's because you gave him everything that he could give everything to us. And just as you were there for him, we'll be there for you.

To Natalie and Hunter, there aren't words big enough to describe how much your dad loved you, how much he loved your mom. But I will tell you what, Michelle and I and Sasha and Malia, we've become part of the Biden clan. We're honorary members now. [*Laughter*] And the Biden family rule applies: We're always here for you; we always will be—my word as a Biden. [*Laughter*]

To Joe and Jill, just like everybody else here, Michelle and I thank God you are in our lives. Taking this ride with you is one of the great pleasures of our lives. Joe, you are my brother. And I am grateful every day that you've got such a big heart and a big soul and those broad shoulders. I couldn't admire you more.

I got to know Joe's mom, Catherine Eugenia Finnegan Biden, before she passed away. She

was on stage with us when we were first elected. And I know she told Joe once that out of everything bad that happens to you, something good will come if you look hard enough. And I suppose she was channeling that same Irish poet with whom I began today, Patrick Kavanagh, when he wrote, "And I said, let grief be a fallen leaf at the dawning of the day."

As hard as it is right now, through all the heartache and through all the tears, it is our obligation to Beau to think not about what was and what might have been, but instead to think about what is, because of him. Think about the day that dawns for children who are safer because of Beau, whose lives are fuller, because of him. Think about the day that dawns for parents who rest easier and families who are freer because of him. Some folks may never know that their lives are better because of Beau Biden. But that's okay. Certainly for Beau, acclaim was never the point of public service.

But the lines of well-wishers who've been here all week, they know. The White House mailroom that's been overflowing with letters from people, those folks know. The soldiers who served with Beau, who joined the National Guard because of him. The workers at Verdi's who still have their home because of him and who thanked him for helping them bus tables one busy night. The students in Newark who remember the time he talked with them for hours, inexhaustible, even after giving a speech, even after taking his National Guard fitness test. The Rehoboth woman who's saved a kind voicemail from him for 5 years and wrote to say, "I loved the way he loved his family." And the stranger who wrote from halfway across this great country just to say: "The only thing we can hope for is that our children make us proud by making a difference in the world. Beau has done that and then some. The world noticed."

Jill, Joe, Hallie, Hunter, and Natalie: The world noticed. They noticed. They felt it, his presence. And Beau lives on in the lives of others. And isn't that the whole point of our time here? To make this country we love fairer and more just, not just for Natalie and Hunter or Naomi or Finnegan or Maisy or Malia or Sasha, but for every child? Isn't that what this amazing journey we've been on is all about, to make life better for the next generation? Beau figured that out so early in life. What an inheritance Beau left us. What an example he set.

"Through our great good fortune, in our youth our hearts were touched with fire," said Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. "But, above all, we have learned that whether a man accepts from Fortune her spade, and will look downward and dig, or from Aspiration her axe and cord, and will scale the ice, the one and only success which it is his to command is to bring to his work a mighty heart."

Beau Biden brought to his work a mighty heart. He brought to his family a mighty heart. What a good man. What an original.

May God bless his memory and the lives of all he touched.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:08 p.m. at St. Anthony of Padua Church. In his remarks, he referred to Hallie O. Biden, wife, R. Hunter Biden II and Natalie P. Biden, children, R. Hunter Biden, brother, Kathleen Buhle Biden, sister-in-law, Ashley B. Biden, sister, Howard Krein, brother-in-law, and Naomi K. Biden, Finnegan J. Biden, and Roberta M. "Maisy" Biden, nieces, of Joseph R. "Beau" Biden III; and Jill T. Biden, wife, and Valerie Biden Owens, sister, of Vice President Joe Biden. He also referred to Rob Buccini, friend of Joseph R. "Beau" Biden III.

Remarks in Krün, Germany
June 7, 2015

Grüss Gott! It is wonderful to be back in Germany for my fourth visit as President. And to my great friend and partner, Chancellor Merkel; to Mayor Schwarzenberger and the people of Krün and—[*inaudible*]—to the people of Germany: Thank you for welcoming me

here today and for the incredible hospitality and the incredible beauty of this place.

I want to thank everybody for this wonderful visit to this beautiful village. I know it's a lot of hard work when I come to town. [*Laughter*] That was, without question, the best alphorn performance that I've ever heard. I have to admit that I forgot to bring my lederhosen. But I'm going to see if I can buy some while I'm here. [*Laughter*]

Now, I must admit that when I first learned that Angela was going to host the G–7 in Bavaria, I was hoping that it would fall during *Oktoberfest.* But, then again, there's never a bad day for a beer and a weisswurst. [*Laughter*] And I can't think of a better place to come to celebrate the enduring friendship between the German and American people.

I come here grateful for the history that we share. And so much of America, including my hometown of Chicago, would not be the same without the contributions of so many German immigrants, including from Bavaria. Over the years, Bavaria and Germany have returned the favor by welcoming countless Americans, including generations of our servicemembers and students from the George Marshall Center. And on behalf of the American people, I want to thank you for your gracious hospitality.

So over the next 2 days in Schloss Elmau, we're going to discuss our shared future: a global economy that creates jobs and opportunity, maintaining a strong and prosperous European Union, forging new trade partnerships across the Atlantic, standing up to Russian aggression in Ukraine, combating threats from violent extremism to climate change. And on all these issues, we are very grateful for the partnership and leadership of your Chancellor, Angela Merkel.

These are all difficult challenges. But part of what gives me hope is the example of Germany. This year marks 70 years since the end of World War II and decades of a great NATO alliance. It marks 25 years since the unification of Germany that inspired the world. The fact that all of us are here together today is proof that conflicts can end and great progress is possible.

So this morning, as we celebrate one of the strongest alliances the world has ever known, my message to the German people is simple: We are grateful for your friendship, for your leadership. We stand together as inseparable allies, in Europe and around the world.

My only final request to Angela is that, on such a beautiful day, instead of being inside, we should have all our summit meetings in this incredible village center and drink beer. [*Laughter*] But I think we'll have to negotiate with the security people. [*Laughter*]

Vielen Dank.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:54 a.m. in the town center. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Thomas Schwarzenberger of Krün, Germany.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom in Krün
June 7, 2015

President Obama. Well, it is wonderful to be back with my good friend and partner, David Cameron. I want to congratulate him, as I did over the phone, on his resounding election victory. And I look forward to working with him on a whole host of issues in the coming year.

This is going to give us an opportunity to discuss a number of particular challenges that require U.S. and United Kingdom leadership. We'll be talking about Russia and Ukraine and the importance of us maintaining the sanctions regime to put pressure on Russian and separatist forces to implement fully the Minsk agreement. We think that there can be a peaceful, diplomatic resolution to this problem, but it's going to require that Europe and the United States and the transatlantic partnership, as well as the world, stay vigilant and stay focused on

the importance of upholding the principles of territorial integrity and sovereignty.

We'll have an opportunity to discuss the effort against ISIL and the situation in Iraq and Syria and assess what's working, what's not, and how we can continue to make progress there in dismantling the infrastructure that ISIL has built and in promoting the kinds of political inclusion in Iraq and ultimately in Syria that are going to be necessary for a long-term solution.

We'll also have a chance to talk about hotspots like Libya and Nigeria, where, obviously, terrorism has gotten a foothold. And more affirmatively, we're going to have an opportunity to continue the discussion bilaterally that we've been having with the other G–7 members around issues like trade and climate change and the importance of U.S. and British leadership on those issues.

So I am very much looking forward to this conversation. We have no closer partner around the globe on a whole host of critical issues. I would note that one of the great values of having the United Kingdom in the European Union is its leadership and strength on a whole host of global challenges. And so we very much are looking forward to the United Kingdom staying a part of the European Union because we think that its influence is positive not just for Europe, but also for the world.

But, David, again, congratulations.

Prime Minister Cameron. Thank you.

President Obama. Look forward to continued work.

Prime Minister Cameron. Well, thank you very much. And it's good to be back with my friend and close partner, Barack Obama, and working together over the coming years.

As you said, Barack, there are so many issues to discuss at this meeting and bilaterally with our very close partnership and the partnership between Britain and the United States, that special relationship. But they all really come down to two words: prosperity and security; what we want for our people back at home, which is the chance of a job, and also the chance of greater security.

And whether we're discussing the situation in the Ukraine, the need to fight Islamic extremist terrorism, particularly in Iraq and Syria, but elsewhere around the world, it's about keeping people safe back at home, where the cooperation between our security and intelligence services and our military is as close as it's ever been and as effective as it's ever been.

We've also got a lot of issues to discuss that really will determine whether we can have successful and strong economies, like the need for these trade deals we were talking about earlier, and also the deal on climate change, which is going to be important for our future prosperity and security.

So a lot of issues to discuss tonight, and it's great to be back together with you addressing them in this bilateral meeting as well as in the bigger G–7. So thank you very much.

President Obama. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:36 p.m. at the Schloss Elmau Retreat. In his remarks, he referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi of Iraq in Krün, Germany
June 8, 2015

President Obama. Well, it is a pleasure to meet with Prime Minister Abadi and his delegation. Obviously, the United States has made an enormous commitment and investment in Iraq, and we're fortunate to have a reliable partner in Prime Minister Abadi.

The challenges that Iraq face continue to be significant. Obviously, ISIL, or Daesh, has been active in its terrorist activities, particularly in Anbar and some of the western portions of the country. We have seen successes, but we've also seen setbacks. In areas like Tikrit, we've seen the Iraqi security forces operate

very effectively with the international coalition to drive back ISIL. Most recently, in Ramadi, we saw ISIL concentrate its forces to get what I believe will be a short-term tactical gain.

What we do know is that our success is going to be dependent on an effective partnership between the international coalition and the Iraqi Government. And that's why a lot of our discussion today will focus on how we can build on the thousands of Iraqi security forces that we have already trained, how we can coordinate more effectively in getting weapons into the hands of those who are prepared to fight ISIL on a timely basis, how we can ensure that the work that the Prime Minister has done to maintain an inclusive Government in Baghdad continues.

And in all of these discussions, what I found is that Prime Minister Abadi is very much committed to effective, inclusive governance. And there's a refreshing honesty, I think, on the part of the Prime Minister in recognizing that there remains a lot of work to be done. But as long as the international coalition sustains its efforts, and as long as Prime Minister Abadi and the Iraqi Government stay committed to an inclusive approach to gaining back territory from ISIL and then instituting governance that is inclusive and serves the people, I'm absolutely confident that we will succeed.

I just realized I should have provided the translation for that. That was kind of a long sentence. Go ahead.

[*At this point, an interpreter translated President Obama's remarks into Arabic. The President then continued as follows.*]

So the United States is going to continue to ramp up our training and assistance. We are going to continue to provide the supplies that are necessary for Iraqi forces to successfully mount offensive campaigns and not simply defensive campaigns inside of Iraq.

In discussions with the G–7 and other coalition partners, they are absolutely committed to making sure that the Iraqi Government can succeed in this process. And I am confident that although it is going to take time and there will be setbacks and lessons learned, that we are going to be successful, ISIL is going to be driven out of Iraq, and ultimately, it is going to be defeated.

[*An interpreter translated President Obama's remarks into Arabic. The President then continued as follows.*]

Mr. Prime Minister.

Prime Minister Abadi. I would like to thank President Obama and the United States and the G–7 countries and the global coalition against ISIL for standing side by side with Iraq to defeat Daesh.

We are fighting several fights and combats against ISIL. We have won many rounds against ISIL. One round we lost was in Ramadi, but I say that we lost it only temporarily. And the Iraqi security forces and the Popular Mobilization Forces, all under the leadership of the commander in chief and the leadership of the Iraqi Government, has taken control of the situation and are endeavoring very hard to liberate all the land in Iraq that is confiscated. And we have liberated a space and amount of land in Iraq that is many folds more than what they have in Ramadi.

And very frankly, Iraqis are fighting on their land, and they are fighting with the international community. And the United States, standing side by side with Iraq—and that is very important because the fight there is one that is a psychological war and a moral war, and we will continue all our efforts to defeat Daesh.

Undoubtedly, we will win the war—we will win the war over ISIS that has a bad ideology, an ideology that is depending on sabotaging archeological sites and killing citizens and targeting and killing minorities and causing destruction in Sunni cities. Of course, ISIS is fully—[*inaudible*]—on anything that has to do with the Sunnis, because ISIS ideology is a false one. And we will—we shall be victorious.

Thank God, we are working on including all the components of the Iraqi people and we are continuing this effort. And our sons and our populations in Ramadi, those who fled the war scenes, come back to areas that are under the control of the Iraqi Government. We welcome

them, and we will continue to help them and do everything for them.

And as we fight Daesh in Ramadi and we endeavor and work hard to expulse Daesh from that region, we sent two brigades to Mosul in order to put the area under—the perimeter of the area under siege and to drive Daesh out of Ninawa.

The problem resides in the foreign fighters, the flux of foreign fighters that goes into Syria and into Iraq, and it creates more of the bloodshed, more of the destruction and the bloodshed and blood-spilling of the innocents. This is what we discussed today and raised this issue at the G–7 today. And this will require the effort and the mobilization of the international community to address.

Just to give an example and an idea: Forty suicide bombers conduct operations and they kill many, and many of them are killed, but these people are from outside and they are coming from outside Iraq.

Also, another thing is that ISIL smuggles oil and tries to generate revenue out of oil smuggling and to generate and fund and funnel money into its terrorist activities. To stop this activity of ISIL, this will require the effort of the international community. We also see that a mobilization is needed by the international community to stop ISIL from recruiting. ISIL recruiting must be stopped, and this can be done by a global intelligence-sharing effort. Iraq cannot do it alone. It doesn't have the resources. But along with our global partners, we can do it.

We believe that by protecting our—the Iraqis and our citizens, and with the help of our allies, with the help of the global community and the international community and the G–7, we will be able to defeat ISIL and be victorious in Iraq.

Thank you, Mr. President.

President Obama. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:53 p.m. at the Schloss Elmau Retreat. In his remarks, he referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization. Prime Minister Abadi spoke in Arabic, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

The President's News Conference in Krün
June 8, 2015

The President. Good afternoon. Let me begin by once again thanking Chancellor Merkel and the people of Bavaria and Germany for their extraordinary hospitality here at the G–7. My stay here has been extraordinary. I wish I could stay longer. And one of the pleasures of being President is scouting out places that you want to come back to, where you don't have to spend all your time in a conference room. The setting is breathtaking. Our German friends have been absolutely wonderful, and the success of this summit is a tribute to their outstanding work.

The G–7 represents some of the largest economies in the world. But in our G–7 partners, the United States also embraces some of our strongest allies and closest friends in the world. So even as we work to promote the growth that creates jobs and opportunity, we're also here to stand up for the fundamental principles that we share as democracies: for freedom, for peace, for the right of nations and peoples to decide their own destiny, for universal human rights and the dignity of every human being. And I'm pleased that here in Krün, we showed that on the most pressing global challenges, America and our allies stand united.

We agree that the best way to sustain the global economic recovery is by focusing on jobs and growth. That's what I'm focused on in the United States. On Friday, we learned that our economy created another 280,000 jobs in May, the strongest month of the year so far, and more than 3 million new jobs over the past year, nearly the fastest pace in over a decade. We've now seen 5 straight years of private sector job growth, 12.6 million new jobs created, the longest streak on record. The unemployment rate is near its lowest level in 7 years.

Wages for American workers continue to rise. And since I took office, the United States has cut our deficit by two-thirds. So in the global economy, America is a major source of strength.

At the same time, we recognize that the global economy, while growing, is still not performing at its full potential, and we agreed on a number of necessary steps. Here in Europe, we support efforts to find a path that enables Greece to carry out key reforms and return to growth within a strong, stable, and growing euro zone. I updated my partners on our effort with Congress to pass trade promotion authority so we can move ahead with TPP in the Asia-Pacific region and T–TIP here in Europe, agreements with high standards to protect workers, public safety, and the environment.

We continue to make progress toward a strong global climate agreement this year in Paris. All the G–7 countries have now put forward our post-2020 targets for reducing carbon emissions, and we'll continue to urge other significant emitters to do so as well. We'll continue to meet our climate finance commitments to help developing countries transition to low-carbon growth.

As we've done in the U.S., the G–7 agreed on the need to integrate climate risks into development assistance and investment programs across the board and to increase access to risk insurance to help developing countries respond to and recover from climate-related disasters. And building on the Power Africa initiative I launched 2 years ago, the G–7 will work to mobilize more financing for clean-energy projects in Africa.

With respect to security, the G–7 remains strongly united in support for Ukraine. We'll continue to provide economic support and technical assistance that Ukraine needs as it moves ahead on critical reforms to transform its economy and strengthen its democracy. As we've seen again in recent days, Russian forces continue to operate in eastern Ukraine, violating Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. This is now the second year in a row that the G–7 has met without Russia, another example of Russia's isolation, and every member of the G–7 continues to maintain sanctions on Russia for its aggression against Ukraine.

Now, it's important to recognize the Russian economy has been seriously weakened. The ruble and foreign investment are down. Inflation is up. The Russian central bank has lost more than $150 billion in reserves. Russian banks and firms are virtually locked out of the international markets. Russian energy companies are struggling to import the services and technologies they need for complex energy projects. Russian defense firms have been cut off from key technologies. Russia is in deep recession. So Russia's actions in Ukraine are hurting Russia and hurting the Russian people.

Here at the G–7, we agreed that even as we will continue to seek a diplomatic solution, sanctions against Russia will remain in place so long as Russia continues to violate its obligations under the Minsk agreements. Our European partners reaffirmed that they will maintain sanctions on Russia until the Minsk agreements are fully implemented, which means extending the EU's existing sectoral sanctions beyond July. And the G–7 is making it clear that, if necessary, we stand ready to impose additional, significant sanctions against Russia.

Beyond Europe, we discussed the negotiations over Iran's nuclear program, and we remain united heading into the final stages of the talks. Iran has a historic opportunity to resolve the international community's concerns about its nuclear program, and we agreed that Iran needs to seize that opportunity.

Our discussions with Prime Minister Abadi of Iraq, President Caid Essebsi of Tunisia, and President Buhari of Nigeria were a chance to address the threats of ISIL and Boko Haram. The G–7 countries, therefore, agreed to work, together and with our partners, to further coordinate our counterterrorism efforts.

As many of the world's leading partners in global development, joined by leaders of Ethiopia, Liberia, Nigeria, Senegal, and the African Union, we discussed how to maximize the impact of our development partnerships. We agreed to continue our landmark initiative to promote food security and nutrition, part of our effort to lift 500 million people in develop-

ing countries out of hunger and malnutrition by 2030. We'll continue to work with our partners in West Africa to get Ebola cases down to zero. And as part of our Global Health Security Agenda, I'm pleased that the G–7 made a major commitment to help 60 countries over the next 5 years achieve specific targets to better prevent, detect, and respond to future outbreaks before they become epidemics.

And finally, I want to commend Chancellor Merkel for ensuring that this summit included a focus on expanding educational and economic opportunities for women and girls. The G–7 committed to expanding career training for women in our own countries and to increase technical and vocational training in developing countries, which will help all of our nations prosper.

So again, I want to thank Angela and the people of Germany for their extraordinary hospitality. I leave here confident that when it comes to the key challenges of our time, America and our closest allies stand shoulder to shoulder.

So with that, I will take some questions. And I will start off with Jeff Mason of Reuters.

Currency Exchange Rates/Greece

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. After your meetings here, you mentioned Greece in your opening statement. Do you believe that the Europeans are being too tough on Greece in these talks? And what else needs to be done on both sides to ensure there's a deal and to ensure that there isn't the undue harm to financial markets that you've warned about?

And on a separate and somewhat related topic, the French told reporters today that you said at the—to G–7 leaders that you're concerned that the dollar is too strong. What did you say exactly? And are you concerned that the dollar is too strong?

The President. First of all, don't believe unnamed quotes. I did not say that. And I make a practice of not commenting on the daily fluctuations of the dollar or any other currency.

With respect to Greece, I think that not only our G–7 partners, but the IMF and other institutions that were represented here feel a sense of urgency in finding a path to resolve the situation there. And what it's going to require is Greece being serious about making some important reforms not only to satisfy creditors, but more importantly, to create a platform whereby the Greek economy can start growing again and prosper. And so the Greeks are going to have to follow through and make some tough political choices that will be good for the long term.

I also think it's going to be important for the international community and the international financial agencies to recognize the extraordinary challenges that Greeks face. And if both sides are showing a sufficient flexibility, then I think we can get this problem resolved. But it will require some tough decisions for all involved, and we will continue to consult with all the parties involved to try to encourage that kind of outcome.

Q. Are you confident it will happen before the deadline?

The President. I think that everybody wants to make it happen, and they're working hard to get it done.

Nedra [Nedra Pickler, Associated Press].

Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA)/Cybersecurity

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. How frustrated are you that after you personally raised your concerns about cybersecurity with the Chinese President that a massive attack on U.S. personnel files seems to have originated from China? Was the Chinese Government involved? And separately, as a sports fan, can you give us your reaction to the FIFA bribery scandal? Thank you.

The President. With respect to FIFA, I cannot comment on a pending case by our Attorney General. I will say that in conversations I've had here in Europe, people think it is very important for FIFA to be able to operate with integrity and transparency and accountability.

And so as the investigation and charges proceed, I think we have to keep in mind that although football, soccer, depending on which side of the Atlantic you live on, is a game, it's a—also a massive business. It is a source of

incredible national pride, and people want to make sure that it operates with integrity. The United States, by the way, since we keep on getting better and better at each World Cup, we want to make sure that a sport that's gaining popularity is conducted in a upright manner.

I don't want to discuss—because we haven't publicly unveiled who we think may have engaged in these cyber attacks—but I can tell you that we have known for a long time that there are significant vulnerabilities and that these vulnerabilities are going to accelerate as time goes by, both in systems within Government and within the private sector. This is why it's so important that Congress moves forward on passing cyber legislation—cybersecurity legislation that we've been pushing for; why, over the last several years, I've been standing up new mechanisms inside of Government for us to investigate what happens and to start finding more effective solutions.

Part of the problem is, is that we've got very old systems. And we discovered this new breach in OPM precisely because we've initiated this process of inventorying and upgrading these old systems to address existing vulnerabilities. And what we are doing is going agency by agency and figuring out what can we fix with better practices and better computer hygiene by personnel, and where do we need new systems and new infrastructure in order to protect information not just of Government employees or Government activities, but also, most importantly, where there's an interface between Government and the American people.

And this is going to be a big project, and we're going to have to keep on doing it, because both state and nonstate actors are sending everything they've got at trying to breach these systems. In some cases, it's nonstate actors who are engaging in criminal activity and potential theft. In the case of state actors, they're probing for intelligence or, in some cases, trying to bring down systems in pursuit of their various foreign policy objectives. In either case, we're going to have to be much more aggressive, much more attentive than we have been.

And this problem is not going to go away. It is going to accelerate. And that means that we have to be as nimble, as aggressive, and as well resourced as those who are trying to break into these systems.

Justin Sink [Bloomberg News].

Trade Promotion Authority/Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) Terrorist Organization/Iraq/Syria

Q. Thanks, Mr. President. I wanted to ask about two things that were on the agenda at the G–7 this weekend. The first was the Islamic State. You said yesterday, ahead of your meeting with Prime Minister Cameron, that you'd assess what was working and what wasn't. So I'm wondering, bluntly, what is not working in the fight against the Islamic State. And in today's bilateral with Prime Minister Abadi, you pledged to step up assistance to Iraq. I'm wondering if that includes additional U.S. military personnel.

Separately, on trade, Chancellor Merkel said today that she was pleased you would get fast track authority. I'm wondering if that means that you gave her or other leaders here assurance that it would go through the House. And if it doesn't, what does it say about your ability to achieve meaningful agreements with Congress for the remainder of your time in office?

The President. Well, on the latter question, I'm not going to hypothesize about not getting it done. I intend to get it done. And, hopefully, we're going to get a vote soon, because I think it's the right thing to do.

With respect to ISIL, we have made significant progress in pushing back ISIL from areas in which they had occupied or disrupted local populations, but we've also seen areas like in Ramadi where they're displaced in one place and then they come back in, in another. And they're nimble, and they're aggressive, and they're opportunistic.

So one of the areas where we're going to have to improve is the speed at which we're training Iraqi forces. Where we've trained Iraqi forces directly and equipped them and we have a train-and-assist posture, they oper-

ate effectively. Where we haven't, morale, lack of equipment, et cetera, may undermine the effectiveness of Iraqi security forces. So we want to get more Iraqi security forces trained, fresh, well equipped, and focused. And President Abadi wants the same thing.

So we're reviewing a range of plans for how we might do that, essentially accelerating the number of Iraqi forces that are properly trained and equipped and have a focused strategy and good leadership. And when a finalized plan is presented to me by the Pentagon, then I will share it with the American people. It's not—I—we don't yet have a complete strategy because it requires commitments on the part of the Iraqis as well about how recruitment takes place, how that training takes place. And so the details of that are not yet worked out.

Q. Is it fair to say that additional military personnel—U.S. military personnel are part of what's under consideration?

The President. I think what is fair to say is that all the countries in the international coalition are prepared to do more to train Iraqi security forces if they feel like that additional work is being taken advantage of. And one of the things that we're still seeing is, in Iraq, places where we've got more training capacity than we have recruits. So part of my discussion with Prime Minister Abadi was, how do we make sure that we get more recruits in? A big part of the answer there is our outreach to Sunni tribes.

We've seen Sunni tribes who are not only willing and prepared to fight ISIL, but have been successful at rebuffing ISIL. But it has not been happening as fast as it needs to. And so one of the efforts that I'm hoping to see out of Prime Minister Abadi and the Iraqi legislature when they're in session is to move forward on a National Guard law that would help to devolve some of the security efforts in places like Anbar to local folks and to get those Sunni tribes involved more rapidly.

This is part of what helped defeat AQI—the precursor of ISIL—during the Iraq war in 2006. Without that kind of local participation, even if you have a short-term success, it's very hard to hold those areas.

The other area where we've got to make a lot more progress is on stemming the flow of foreign fighters. Now, you'll recall that I hosted a U.N. General Security Council meeting specifically on this issue, and we've made some progress, but not enough. We are still seeing thousands of foreign fighters flowing into, first, Syria, and then, oftentimes, ultimately into Iraq.

And not all of that is preventable, but a lot of it is preventable, if we've got better cooperation, better coordination, better intelligence, if we are monitoring what's happening at the Turkish-Syria border more effectively. This is an area where we've been seeking deeper cooperation with Turkish authorities, who recognize it's a problem but haven't fully ramped up the capacity they need. And this is something that I think we've got to spend a lot of time on.

If we can cut off some of that foreign fighter flow, then we're able to isolate and wear out ISIL forces that are already there. Because we're taking a lot of them off the battlefield, but if they're being replenished, then it doesn't solve the problem over the long term.

The final point that I emphasized to Prime Minister Abadi is the political agenda of inclusion remains as important as the military fight that's out there. If Sunnis, Kurds, and Shia all feel as if their concerns are being addressed and that operating within a legitimate political structure can meet their need for security, prosperity, nondiscrimination, then we're going to have a much easier time.

And Prime—the good news is, Prime Minister Abadi is very much committed to that principle. But obviously, he's inheriting a legacy of a lot of mistrust between various groups in Iraq. He's having to take a lot of political risks. In some cases, there are efforts to undermine those efforts by other political factions within Iraq. And so we've got to continue to monitor that and support those who are on the right side of the issue there.

Colleen Nelson [Wall Street Journal].

Ukraine/Russia/Immigration Reform

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. You mentioned that the U.S. and its European allies

have reached a consensus on extending the sanctions against Russia. Is there a consensus, though, about what specifically the next step should be if Russia continues to violate the Minsk agreement? And also if—can you deter Russian aggression in other parts of Eastern Europe without a permanent U.S. troop presence?

And separately, I wanted to ask you about the possibility that the court battle over your actions on immigration could extend late into your term. Do you think that there's anything more that you can do for the people who would have benefited from that program and now are in limbo? And how do you view the possibility of your term ending without accomplishing your goals on immigration?

The President. On Ukraine and Russia and Minsk, there is strong consensus that we need to keep pushing Russia to abide by the terms of the Minsk agreement; we need to continue to support and encourage Ukraine to meet its obligations under Minsk; that until that's completed, sanctions remain in place.

There was discussion about additional steps that we might need to take if Russia, working through separatists, doubled down on aggression inside of Ukraine. We—those discussions are taking place at a technical level, not yet at a political level, because I think the first goal here going into a European Council meeting that's coming up is just rolling over the existing sanctions. But I think at a technical level, we want to be prepared.

Our hope is, is that we don't have to take additional steps because the Minsk agreement is met. And I want to give enormous credit to Chancellor Merkel, along with President Hollande, who have shown extraordinary stick-to-itiveness and patience in trying to get that done.

Ultimately, this is going to be an issue for Mr. Putin. He's got to make a decision: Does he continue to wreck his country's economy and continue Russia's isolation in pursuit of a wrongheaded desire to recreate the glories of the Soviet empire, or does he recognize that Russia's greatness does not depend on violating the territorial integrity and sovereignty of other countries?

And as I mentioned earlier, the costs that the Russian people are bearing are severe. That's being felt. It may not always be understood why they're suffering, because of state media inside of Russia and propaganda coming out of state media in Russia and to Russian speakers. But the truth of the matter is, is that the Russian people would greatly benefit. And ironically, one of the rationales that Mr. Putin provided for his incursions into Ukraine was to protect Russian speakers there. Well, Russian speakers inside of Ukraine are precisely the ones who are bearing the brunt of the fighting. Their economy has collapsed. Their lives are disordered. Many of them are displaced. Their homes may have been destroyed. They're suffering. And the best way for them to stop suffering is if the Minsk agreement is fully implemented.

Christi—oh, immigration. With respect to immigration, obviously, I'm frustrated by a district court ruling that now is wending its way through the appeals process. We are being as aggressive as we can legally to, first and foremost, appeal that ruling, and then to implement those elements of immigration executive actions that were not challenged in court.

But obviously, the centerpiece, one of the key provisions for me was being able to get folks who are undocumented to go through a background check—criminal background check—pay back taxes, and then have a legal status. And that requires an entire administrative apparatus and us getting them to apply and come clean.

I made a decision, which I think is the right one, that we should not accept applications until the legal status of this is clarified. I am absolutely convinced this is well within my legal authority, Department of Homeland Security's legal authority. If you look at the precedent, if you look at the traditional discretion that the executive branch possesses when it comes to applying immigration laws, I am convinced that what we're doing is lawful, and our lawyers are convinced that what we're doing is lawful.

But the United States is a government of laws and separations of power, and when a—even if it's a individual district court judge who's making this determination, we've got to go through the process to challenge it. And until we get clarity there, I don't want to bring people in, have them apply and jump through a lot of hoops, only to have it deferred and delayed further.

Of course, there's one really great way to solve this problem, and that would be Congress going ahead and acting, which would obviate the need for executive actions. The majority of the American people, I think, still want to see that happen. I suspect it will be a major topic of the next Presidential campaign.

And so we will continue to push as hard as we can on all fronts to fix a broken immigration system. Administratively, we'll be prepared if and when we get the kind of ruling that I think we should have gotten in the first place about our authorities to go ahead and implement. But ultimately, this has never fully replaced the need for Congress to act. And my hope is, is that after a number of the other issues that we're working on currently get cleared, that there—some quiet conversations start up—back up again, particularly in the Republican Party, about the shortsighted approach that they're taking when it comes to immigration.

Okay. Christi Parsons [Los Angeles Times].

King v. Burwell Supreme Court Case/Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. More than 6 million Americans may soon lose health insurance if the Supreme Court this month backs the latest challenge to the Affordable Care Act. A growing number of States are looking for assistance as they face the prospect that their residents may lose Federal insurance subsidies and their insurance markets may collapse. Yet your administration has given very little to no guidance on how States can prepare. What can you tell State leaders and advocates who worry that health care markets in half the country may be thrown into chaos?

The President. What I can tell State leaders is, is that under well-established precedent, there is no reason why the existing exchanges should be overturned through a court case. It has been well documented that those who passed this legislation never intended for folks who were going through the Federal exchange not to have their citizens get subsidies. That's not just the opinion of me, that's not just the opinion of Democrats, that's the opinion of the Republicans who worked on the legislation. The record makes it clear.

And under well-established statutory interpretation approaches that have been repeatedly employed—not just by liberal, Democratic judges, but by conservative judges like some on the current Supreme Court—you interpret a statute based on what the intent and meaning and the overall structure of the statute provides for.

And so this should be an easy case. Frankly, it probably shouldn't even have been taken up. And since we're going to get a ruling pretty quick, I think it's important for us to go ahead and assume that the Supreme Court's going to do what most legal scholars who've looked at this would expect them to do.

But look, I've said before and I will repeat again: If, in fact, you have a contorted reading of the statute that says Federal-run exchanges don't provide subsidies for folks who are participating in those exchanges, then that throws off how that exchange operates. It means that millions of people who are obtaining insurance currently with subsidies suddenly aren't getting those subsidies; many of them can't afford it, they pull out, and the assumptions that the insurance companies made when they priced their insurance suddenly gets thrown out the window. And it would be disruptive not just, by the way, for folks in the exchanges, but for those insurance markets in those States, generally.

So it's a bad idea. It's not something that should be done based on a twisted interpretation of four words in—as we were reminded repeatedly—a couple-thousand-page piece of legislation.

What's more, the thing's working. I mean, what—part of what's bizarre about this whole thing is we haven't had a lot of conversation

about the horrors of Obamacare because none of them come to pass. You got 16 million people who've gotten health insurance. The overwhelming majority of them are satisfied with the health insurance. It hasn't had an adverse effect on people who already had health insurance. The only effect it's had on people who already had health insurance is they now have an assurance that they won't be prevented from getting health insurance if they've got a preexisting condition, and they get additional protections with the health insurance that they do have.

The costs have come in substantially lower than even our estimates about how much it would cost. Health care inflation overall has continued to be at some of the lowest levels in 50 years. None of the predictions about how this wouldn't work have come to pass.

And so I'm—A, I'm optimistic that the Supreme Court will play it straight when it comes to the interpretation; and, B, I should mention that if it didn't, Congress could fix this whole thing with a one-sentence provision. So——

Q. You're——

The President. ——but I'm not going to go into a long speculation anticipating disaster.

Q. But you're a plan-ahead kind of guy. Why not have a plan B?

The President. Well, you know, I want to just make sure that everybody understands that you have a model that—where all the pieces connect. And, I mean, there are a whole bunch of scenarios not just in relation to health care, but all kinds of stuff that I do, where if somebody does something that doesn't make any sense, then it's hard to fix. And this would be hard to fix. Fortunately, there's no reason to have to do it. It doesn't need fixing. All right?

Thank you very much. Thank you to the people of Germany and Bavaria. You guys were wonderful hosts.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 4:08 p.m. in the Schloss Elmau Briefing Center. In his remarks, the President referred to Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn of Ethiopia; President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia; President Macky Sall of Senegal; Chairperson Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma of the African Union Commission; President Francois Hollande of France; and President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia.

Joint Statement—Group of Seven Leaders' Declaration
June 8, 2015

Schloss Elmau, Germany

We, the leaders of the G7, met in Elmau for our annual Summit on 7 and 8 June 2015. Guided by our shared values and principles, we are determined to work closely together to meet the complex international economic and political challenges of our times. We are committed to the values of freedom and democracy, and their universality, to the rule of law and respect for human rights, and to fostering peace and security. Especially in view of the numerous crises in the world, we as G7 nations stand united in our commitment to uphold freedom, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The G7 feels a special responsibility for shaping our planet's future. 2015 is a milestone year for international cooperation and sustainable development issues. The UN Climate Conference in Paris COP 21 is crucial for the protection of the global climate, the UN summit in New York will set the universal global sustainable development agenda for the years to come and the Third International Conference on Financing for Development in Addis Ababa will support the implementation of the Post-2015 Development Agenda. We want to provide key impetus for ambitious results. "Think ahead. Act together."—that is our guiding principle.

We have today agreed on concrete steps with regard to health, the empowerment of women and climate protection, to play our part in addressing the major global challenges and to respond to some of the most pressing issues in the world. Furthermore, in addition to fos-

tering trade as a key engine for growth, putting these concrete steps into action, will help us to achieve our pivotal goal of strong, sustainable and balanced growth as well as job creation. We call on others to join us in pursuing this agenda.

Global Economy

State of the Global Economy

The global economic recovery has progressed since we last met. In some major advanced economies growth is strengthening and prospects have improved. The decline of energy prices has supportive effects in most of the G7 economies. However, many of our economies are still operating below their full potential and more work is needed to achieve our aim of strong, sustainable and balanced growth. Overall G7 unemployment is still too high, although it has decreased substantially in recent years. We also continue to see challenges such as prolonged low inflation rates, weak investment and demand, high public and private debt, sustained internal and external imbalances, geopolitical tensions as well as financial market volatility.

We commit to addressing these challenges and to continuing our efforts to achieve growth for all. Stronger and inclusive growth requires that we confront the vulnerabilities in our economies. To ensure that G7 countries operate at the technological frontier in the years ahead, we will foster growth by promoting education and innovation, protecting intellectual property rights, supporting private investment with a business friendly climate especially for small and medium-sized enterprises, ensuring an appropriate level of public investment, promoting quality infrastructure investment to address shortfalls through effective resource mobilization in partnership with the private sector and increasing productivity by further implementing ambitious structural reforms.

We agree to deliver on past reform commitments in these areas which will increase confidence and lift sustainable growth. We will continue to implement our fiscal strategies flexibly to take into account near-term economic conditions, so as to support growth and job creation, while putting debt as a share of GDP on a sustainable path. We concur that monetary policies should maintain price stability and support economic recovery within the mandate of central banks. We reaffirm our existing G7 exchange rate commitments.

A sound economic basis is a cornerstone for a better life for all people. Putting the world on a sustainable growth path in the long run will require in particular the protection of our climate, the promotion of health and the equal participation of all members of society. Therefore, the G7 commits to putting these issues at the centre of our growth agenda.

Women's Entrepreneurship

Women's entrepreneurship is a key driver of innovation, growth and jobs. However, across G7 countries and around the world far fewer women than men run their own businesses often due to additional barriers that women face in starting and growing businesses. We agree on common principles to boost women's entrepreneurship, as set out in the annex, and invite other interested countries to join us in this effort. In particular, we will make girls and women aware of the possibility of becoming entrepreneurs. We will address the specific needs of women entrepreneurs, e.g. by promoting their access to finance, markets, skills, leadership opportunities and networks. We ask the OECD to monitor progress on promoting women's entrepreneurship. We welcome the G7 Forum for Dialogue with Women to be hosted by the Presidency on 16 and 17 September 2015. We also reaffirm our commitment to continue our work to promote gender equality as well as full participation and empowerment for all women and girls. We welcome the "World Assembly for Women: WAW!" to be hosted by Japan, G7 Presidency in 2016.

Financial Market Regulation

A sound international financial system is key to putting growth on a sustainable path. Core reforms have been agreed to tackle the root causes of the global financial crisis, and

important progress has been made on building a stronger and more resilient financial system, in particular by strengthening the soundness of the banking sector. However, the job is not yet finished, and following through on regulatory reform continues to be key. Going forward, we have identified the following priorities: full, consistent and prompt implementation of agreed reforms will be essential to ensuring an open and resilient global financial system. We will continue to address the "too-big-to-fail" problem on a global level to protect taxpayers from bearing losses generated by the failure of global systemically important financial institutions. In particular, we remain committed to finalizing the proposed common international standard on total loss absorbing capacity for global systemically important banks by November, following the completion of rigorous and comprehensive impact assessments.

We also remain committed to strengthening the regulation and oversight of the shadow banking sector, appropriate to the systemic risk posed. Timely and comprehensive implementation of the agreed G20 shadow banking roadmap is essential. In addition, we will monitor and address any newly evolving systemic risks from market-based finance, while we will work to ensure that it is able to fulfil its role in supporting the real economy. To help reduce systemic risk and increase transparency, we also stress the importance of enhanced cross-border cooperation in financial regulatory areas to enable regulations to be more effective, particularly in the areas of resolution and derivatives markets reform, where swift implementation is required. We encourage jurisdictions to defer to each other, when justified in line with the St Petersburg Declaration. Finally, we will also continue to monitor financial market volatility in order to address any emerging systemic risk that could arise.

Tax

We are committed to achieving a fair and modern international tax system which is essential to fairness and prosperity for all. We therefore reaffirm our commitment to finalize concrete and feasible recommendations for the G20/OECD Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS) Action Plan by the end of this year. Going forward, it will be crucial to ensure its effective implementation, and we encourage the G20 and the OECD to establish a targeted monitoring process to that end. We commit to strongly promoting automatic exchange of information on cross-border tax rulings. Moreover, we look forward to the rapid implementation of the new single global standard for automatic exchange of information by the end of 2017 or 2018, including by all financial centres subject to completing necessary legislative procedures. We also urge jurisdictions that have not yet, or not adequately, implemented the international standard for the exchange of information on request to do so expeditiously.

We recognize the importance of beneficial ownership transparency for combatting tax evasion, corruption and other activities generating illicit flows of finance and commit to providing updates on the implementation of our national action plans. We reiterate our commitment to work with developing countries on the international tax agenda and will continue to assist them in building their tax administration capacities.

Moreover, we will strive to improve existing international information networks and cross-border cooperation on tax matters, including through a commitment to establish binding mandatory arbitration in order to ensure that the risk of double taxation does not act as a barrier to cross-border trade and investment. We support work done on binding arbitration as part of the BEPS project and we encourage others to join us in this important endeavour.

Trade

Trade and investment are key drivers of growth, jobs and sustainable development. Fostering global economic growth by reducing barriers to trade remains imperative and we reaffirm our commitment to keep markets open and fight all forms of protectionism, including through standstill and rollback. To that end, we support a further extension of the G20 standstill commitment and call on others to do the same. At the same time, we remain committed

to reducing barriers to trade and to improving competitiveness by taking unilateral steps to liberalize our economies. We will protect and promote investment and maintain a level playing field for all investors. International standards for public export finance are key to avoiding or reducing distortions in global trade, and we emphasize our support for the international working group on standards for public export finance.

We are committed to strengthening the rules-based multilateral trading system, including by contributing to full and swift implementation of the WTO Bali package. The focus in 2015 should in particular be on the entry into force of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA). To that end, G7 members commit to making every effort to complete their domestic ratification procedures in advance of the Tenth WTO Ministerial Conference (MC 10) in Nairobi this December. We also call for swift agreement by July of a WTO post-Bali work programme that secures a prompt conclusion and balanced outcome of the Doha Round and we fully support ongoing efforts in the WTO to this end.

Both the implementation of the TFA and agreement on a post-Bali work programme should lay the ground for a successful MC 10, the first WTO Ministerial to be held in Africa. We stand ready to continue our support to developing countries to help implement the measures agreed in the TFA. We must build on the success of the 2013 WTO Ministerial, which reinvigorated the negotiating pillar of the WTO, and demonstrated that flexibility is achievable within the consensus framework of the WTO. We look forward to the discussions at the G20 on ways to make the multilateral trading system work better, based on input from the WTO.

While strengthening the multilateral trading system remains a priority, we also welcome ongoing efforts to conclude ambitious and high-standard new bilateral and regional free trade agreements (FTAs) and look forward to swift progress in plurilateral negotiations, including the Trade in Services Agreement (TiSA), the expansion of the Information Technology Agreement (ITA) and the Environmental Goods Agreement (EGA). We will work to conclude the expansion of the ITA without delay. These agreements are able to support the multilateral system, contribute to stronger global trade and to more growth and jobs and can act as building blocks for future multilateral agreements. To this end, FTAs need to be transparent, high-standard, and comprehensive as well as consistent with and supportive of the WTO framework.

We welcome progress on major ongoing trade negotiations, including on the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) and the EU-Japan FTA/Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), aimed at reaching ambitious, comprehensive and mutually beneficial agreements. We will make every effort to finalize negotiations on the TPP as soon as possible as well as to reach agreement in principle on the EU-Japan FTA/EPA preferably by the end of the year. We will immediately accelerate work on all TTIP issues, ensuring progress in all the elements of the negotiations, with the goal of finalizing understandings on the outline of an agreement as soon as possible, preferably by the end of this year. We welcome the conclusion of the negotiations on the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) between Canada and the EU and look forward to its timely entry into force. We will work to ensure that our bilateral and regional FTAs support the global economy.

Responsible Supply Chains

Unsafe and poor working conditions lead to significant social and economic losses and are linked to environmental damage. Given our prominent share in the globalization process, G7 countries have an important role to play in promoting labour rights, decent working conditions and environmental protection in global supply chains. We will strive for better application of internationally recognized labour, social and environmental standards, principles and commitments (in particular UN, OECD, ILO and applicable environmental agreements) in global supply chains. We will engage with

other countries, for example within the G20, to that end.

We strongly support the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and welcome the efforts to set up substantive National Action Plans. In line with the UN Guiding Principles, we urge private sector implementation of human rights due diligence. We will take action to promote better working conditions by increasing transparency, promoting identification and prevention of risks and strengthening complaint mechanisms. We recognize the joint responsibility of governments and business to foster sustainable supply chains and encourage best practices.

To enhance supply chain transparency and accountability, we encourage enterprises active or headquartered in our countries to implement due diligence procedures regarding their supply chains, e.g. voluntary due diligence plans or guides. We welcome international efforts, including private sector input, to promulgate industry-wide due diligence standards in the textile and ready-made garment sector. To promote safe and sustainable supply chains, we will increase our support to help SMEs develop a common understanding of due diligence and responsible supply chain management.

We welcome initiatives to promote the establishment of appropriate, impartial tools to help consumers and public procurers in our countries compare information on the validity and credibility of social and environmental product labels. One example is the use of relevant apps, which are already available in some countries. Moreover, we will strengthen multi-stakeholder initiatives in our countries and in partner countries, including in the textile and ready-made garment sector, building upon good practices learned from the Rana Plaza aftermath. We will continue supporting relevant global initiatives. Furthermore, we will better coordinate our bilateral development cooperation and support partner countries in taking advantage of responsible global supply chains to foster their sustainable economic development.

We support a "Vision Zero Fund" to be established in cooperation with the International Labour Organization (ILO). The Fund will also add value to existing ILO projects with its aim of preventing and reducing workplace-related deaths and serious injuries by strengthening public frameworks and establishing sustainable business practices. Access to the Fund will be conditional: the Fund will support those recipients that commit themselves to prevention measures and the implementation of labour, social, environmental and safety standards. We agree to follow up on the matter and look forward to the Fund reaching out to the G20.

We also commit to strengthening mechanisms for providing access to remedies including the National Contact Points (NCPs) for the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises. In order to do so, the G7 will encourage the OECD to promote peer reviews and peer learning on the functioning and performance of NCPs. We will ensure that our own NCPs are effective and lead by example.

We welcome the closing of the funding gap in the Rana Plaza Donor Trust Fund for compensating the victims of the tragic accident in 2013.

Foreign Policy

Acting on Common Values and Principles

We, the G7, emphasise the importance of freedom, peace and territorial integrity, as well as respect for international law and respect for human rights. We strongly support all efforts to uphold the sovereign equality of all States as well as respect for their territorial integrity and political independence. We are concerned by current conflicts which indicate an erosion of respect for international law and of global security.

Based on our common values and principles we are committed to:

Finding a Solution to the Conflict in Ukraine

We reiterate our condemnation of the illegal annexation of the Crimean peninsula by the Russian Federation and reaffirm our policy of its non-recognition.

We reiterate our full support for the efforts to find a diplomatic solution to the conflict in eastern Ukraine, particularly in the framework of the Normandy format and the Trilateral Contact Group. We welcome the OSCE's key role in finding a peaceful solution. We call on all sides to fully implement the Minsk agreements including the Package of Measures for their implementation signed on 12 February 2015 in Minsk, through the established Trilateral Contact Group and the four working groups. We are concerned by the recent increase in fighting along the line of contact; we renew our call to all sides to fully respect and implement the ceasefire and withdraw heavy weapons. We recall that the duration of sanctions should be clearly linked to Russia's complete implementation of the Minsk agreements and respect for Ukraine's sovereignty. They can be rolled back when Russia meets these commitments. However, we also stand ready to take further restrictive measures in order to increase cost on Russia should its actions so require. We expect Russia to stop trans-border support of separatist forces and to use its considerable influence over the separatists to meet their Minsk commitments in full.

We commend and support the steps the Ukrainian government is taking to implement comprehensive structural reforms and urge the Ukrainian leadership to decisively continue the necessary fundamental transformation in line with IMF and EU commitments. We reaffirm our commitment to working together with the international financial institutions and other partners to provide financial and technical support as Ukraine moves forward with its transformation. We ask the G7 Ambassadors in Kiev to establish a Ukraine support group. Its task will be to advance Ukraine's economic reform process through coordinated advice and assistance.

Achieving High Levels of Nuclear Safety

Achieving and maintaining high levels of nuclear safety worldwide remains a major priority to us. We welcome the report of the G7 Nuclear Safety and Security Group. We remain committed to bringing the Chernobyl Shelter Project to a successful completion in order to make the Chernobyl site stable and environmentally safe.

Maintaining a Rules-Based Maritime Order and Achieving Maritime Security

We are committed to maintaining a rules-based order in the maritime domain based on the principles of international law, in particular as reflected in the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. We are concerned by tensions in the East and South China Seas. We underline the importance of peaceful dispute settlement as well as free and unimpeded lawful use of the world's oceans. We strongly oppose the use of intimidation, coercion or force, as well as any unilateral actions that seek to change the status quo, such as large scale land reclamation. We endorse the Declaration on Maritime Security issued by G7 Foreign Ministers in Lübeck.

Strengthening the System of Multilateral Treaties/Arms Trade Treaty

We emphasise the importance of strengthening the system of multilateral treaties and commitments and in this regard stress the importance of the Arms Trade Treaty, which entered into force on 24 December 2014.

Preventing and Combating Proliferation

We remain committed to the universalisation of all relevant treaties and conventions that contribute to preventing and combating the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, in particular the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention. We strongly regret that, although agreement was reached on a number of substantive issues, it was not possible to reach consensus on a final document at the Ninth NPT Review Conference. The G7 renew their commitment to the full implementation of the 2010 Action Plan across the three pillars of the Treaty. The NPT remains the cornerstone of the nuclear non-proliferation regime and the essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament and

non-proliferation, as well as for the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

Iran

We welcome the political understanding on key parameters of a Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action reached by the E3+3, facilitated by the EU, and Iran on 2 April. We support the continuous efforts by the E3/EU+3 and Iran to achieve a comprehensive solution by 30 June that ensures the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme and ensures that Iran does not acquire a nuclear weapon. We call on Iran to cooperate fully with the International Atomic Energy Agency on verification of Iran's nuclear activities and to address all outstanding issues, including those relating to possible military dimensions. We urge Iran to respect the human rights of its citizens and to to contribute constructively to regional stability.

North Korea

We strongly condemn North Korea's continued development of nuclear and ballistic missile programmes, as well as its appalling human rights violations, and its abductions of nationals from other countries.

Supporting Diplomatic Solutions

We are deeply concerned by the dramatic political, security and humanitarian situation in fragile countries and regions and the dangers originating from these conflicts for neighbouring countries and beyond. We condemn in the strongest terms all forms of sexual violence in conflict, and are committed to enhancing the role of women in international peace and security. Sustainable solutions need to be inclusive in order to reestablish effective governance and achieve sustainable peace and stability.

We support the ongoing UN-led processes to find lasting solutions for peace and stability in Syria, Libya and Yemen. A genuine UN led transition based on the full implementation of the Geneva Communiqué is the only way to bring peace and defeat terrorism in Syria.

Libya

In Libya, we are deeply concerned about the growing terrorist threat, arms proliferation, migrant smuggling, humanitarian suffering and the depletion of state assets. Unless a political agreement is reached, the ongoing instability risks prolonging the crisis that is felt most keenly and acutely by the Libyan people themselves. They are already suffering as terrorist groups attempt to expand into ungoverned space and criminal networks exploit the situation by facilitating irregular migration through Libya.

The time for fighting has passed, the moment for bold political decisions has come. We call on Libyans from all sides to seize this opportunity, to put down their weapons and work together to transform the aspirations that gave birth to the revolution into the political foundations of a democratic state. The time for political agreement is now and we commend those Libyans who have supported the dialogue process and displayed leadership by pursuing peace in their own communities.

We welcome the progress made by all the parties to the negotiations led by UNSRSG Bernardino León. Libyan leaders must now grasp the opportunity to conclude these negotiations and to form a Government of National Accord (GNA) accountable to the Libyan people. They, and those who have influence over them, must show the necessary strength and leadership at this critical moment to reach and implement agreement.

Once an agreement is reached, we stand ready to provide significant support to such an inclusive and representative government as it tries to build effective state institutions, including security forces, to restore public services, to expand infrastructure, strengthen, rebuild and diversify the economy and to rid the country of terrorists and criminal networks.

Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

On the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, we call upon the parties, with the active support of the International Community, including the Quartet, to work towards a negotiated solution based on two States living in peace and security.

Fighting Trafficking of Migrants/Tackling Causes for Refugee Crises

We are extremely preoccupied about the increasing and unprecedented global flow of refugees, internally displaced persons, and migrants caused by a multitude of conflicts and humanitarian crises, dire economic and ecological situations and repressive regimes. Recent tragedies in the Mediterranean and the Bay of Bengal/Andaman Sea illustrate the urgent need to address effectively this phenomenon, and in particular the crime of trafficking of migrants. We reaffirm our commitment to prevent and combat the trafficking of migrants, and to detect, deter and disrupt human trafficking in and beyond our borders. We call upon all nations to tackle the causes of these crises that have such tragic consequences for so many people and to address the unique development needs of middle-income countries hosting refugees and migrants.

Fighting Terrorism and its Financing

The scourge of terrorism has affected countless innocent victims. It denies tolerance, the enjoyment of universal human rights and fundamental freedoms, including religious freedom, destroys cultural heritage and uproots millions of people from their homes. In light of the Foreign Terrorist Fighters phenomenon, the fight against terrorism and violent extremism will have to remain the priority for the whole international community. In this context we welcome the continued efforts of the Global Coalition to counter ISIL/Da'esh. We reaffirm our commitment to defeating this terrorist group and combatting the spread of its hateful ideology. We stand united with all countries and regions afflicted by the brutal terrorist acts, including Iraq, Tunisia and Nigeria whose leaders participated in our discussions at Schloss Elmau. It is a task for all nations and societies to confront the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism and violent extremism, including the spread of hatred and intolerance, also through the internet, by promoting good governance and respect for human rights. We stress the importance of implementing the necessary measures to detect and prevent acts of terrorism, to prosecute those responsible, and rehabilitate and reintegrate offenders, in accordance with international law, and to prevent the financing of terrorism.

The fight against terrorism and terrorist financing is a major priority for the G7. We will continue to act fast and decisively, and will strengthen our coordinated action. In particular we reaffirm our commitment to effectively implement the established international framework for the freezing of terrorists' assets, and will facilitate cross-border freezing requests among G7 countries. We will take further actions to ensure greater transparency of all financial flows, including through an appropriate regulation of virtual currencies and other new payment methods. We reaffirm the importance of the ongoing work undertaken by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), and commit to contributing actively to this work. We will strive to ensure an effective implementation of FATF standards, including through a robust follow-up process.

Likewise, we are committed to combating wildlife trafficking, which is pushing some of the world's species to the brink of extinction and in some instances is being used to finance organized crime, insurgencies, and terrorism.

Supporting African Partners

We welcome the strengthening of democratic institutions and the growing economic opportunities across Africa, and note this progress under challenging circumstances across the continent, including progress in establishing stability in Somalia and a largely peaceful democratic transition in Nigeria. We reiterate our continued commitment to support African partners in addressing challenges to security, governance and stability, including in Mali, Sudan, South Sudan, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, Nigeria and most recently Burundi.

Supporting Afghanistan

We are committed to an enduring partnership with Afghanistan in support of its stability, prosperity and democratic future.

Supporting the Reconstruction in Nepal

We are deeply saddened by the loss of life and destruction caused by the devastating earthquakes in Nepal and are offering the people and the government of Nepal our ongoing support. We will continue to provide emergency assistance as needed and are ready to consider requests for bi- and multilateral financial and technical support as well as reconstruction assistance in alignment with the priorities of the Nepalese government. We strive to contribute to the restoration of lost and damaged cultural treasures.

Health

The enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being. We are therefore strongly committed to continuing our engagement in this field with a specific focus on strengthening health systems through bilateral programmes and multilateral structures.

Ebola

We commit to preventing future outbreaks from becoming epidemics by assisting countries to implement the World Health Organization's International Health Regulations (IHR), including through Global Health Security Agenda and its common targets and other multilateral initiatives. In order to achieve this we will offer to assist at least 60 countries, including the countries of West Africa, over the next five years, building on countries' expertise and existing partnerships. We encourage other development partners and countries to join this collective effort. In this framework, we will also be mindful of the healthcare needs of migrants and refugees.

The Ebola crisis has shown that the world needs to improve its capacity to prevent, protect against, detect, report and respond to public health emergencies. We are strongly committed to getting the Ebola cases down to zero. We also recognize the importance of supporting recovery for those countries most affected by the outbreak. We must draw lessons from this crisis. We acknowledge the work that is being done by the WHO and welcome the outcome agreed at the Special Session of the Executive Board on Ebola and the 68th World Health Assembly. We support the ongoing process to reform and strengthen the WHO's capacity to prepare for and respond to complex health crises while reaffirming the central role of the WHO for international health security.

We welcome the initiative proposed by Germany, Ghana and Norway to the UN Secretary-General to draw up a comprehensive proposal for effective crisis management in the area of health and look forward to the report to be produced by the end of the year by the high-level panel established by the UN Secretary General. The Ebola outbreak has shown that the timely mobilization and disbursement of appropriate response capacities, both funding and human resources, is crucial. We welcome the ongoing development of mechanisms including by the WHO, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund and call on all partners to strongly coordinate their work. We support the initiative taken by the World Bank to develop a Pandemic Emergency Facility. We encourage the G20 to advance this agenda. Simultaneously, we will coordinate to fight future epidemics and will set up or strengthen mechanisms for rapid deployment of multidisciplinary teams of experts coordinated through a common platform. We will implement those mechanisms in close cooperation with the WHO and national authorities of affected countries.

Antimicrobial Resistances

Antimicrobials play a crucial role for the current and future success of human and veterinary medicine. We fully support the recently adopted WHO Global Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance. We will develop or review and effectively implement our national action plans and support other countries as they develop their own national action plans.

We are strongly committed to the One Health approach, encompassing all areas—human, and animal health as well as agriculture and the environment. We will foster the prudent use of antibiotics and will engage in stim-

ulating basic research, research on epidemiology, infection prevention and control, and the development of new antibiotics, alternative therapies, vaccines and rapid point-of-care diagnostics. We commit to taking into account the annex (Joint Efforts to Combat Antimicrobial Resistance) as we develop or review and share our national action plans.

Neglected Tropical Diseases

We commit ourselves to the fight against neglected tropical diseases (NTDs). We are convinced that research plays a vital role in the development and implementation of new means of tackling NTDs. We will work collaboratively with key partners, including the WHO Global Observatory on Health Research and Development. In this regard we will contribute to coordinating research and development (R&D) efforts and make our data available. We will build on efforts to map current R&D activities, which will help facilitate improved coordination in R&D and contribute to better addressing the issue of NTDs. We commit to supporting NTD-related research, focusing notably on areas of most urgent need. We acknowledge the role of the G7-Academies of Science in identifying such areas. In particular, we will stimulate both basic research on prevention, control and treatment and research focused on faster and targeted development of easily usable and affordable drugs, vaccines and point-of-care technologies.

As part of our health system strengthening efforts we will continue to advocate accessible, affordable, quality and essential health services for all. We support community based response mechanisms to distribute therapies and otherwise prevent, control and ultimately eliminate these diseases. We will invest in the prevention and control of NTDs in order to achieve 2020 elimination goals.

We are committed to ending preventable child deaths and improving maternal health worldwide, supporting the renewal of the Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health and welcoming the establishment of the Global Financing Facility in support of "Every Woman, Every Child" and therefore welcome the success of the replenishment conference in Berlin for Gavi, the Global Vaccine Alliance, which has mobilized more than USD 7.5 billion to vaccinate an additional 300 million children by 2020. We fully support the ongoing work of the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and look forward to its successful replenishment in 2016 with the support of an enlarged group of donors.

Climate Change, Energy, and Environment

Climate Change

Urgent and concrete action is needed to address climate change, as set out in the IPCC's Fifth Assessment Report. We affirm our strong determination to adopt at the Climate Change Conference in December in Paris this year (COP21) a protocol, another legal instrument or an agreed outcome with legal force under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) applicable to all parties that is ambitious, robust, inclusive and reflects evolving national circumstances.

The agreement should enhance transparency and accountability including through binding rules at its core to track progress towards achieving targets, which should promote increased ambition over time. This should enable all countries to follow a low-carbon and resilient development pathway in line with the global goal to hold the increase in global average temperature below 2°C.

Mindful of this goal and considering the latest IPCC results, we emphasize that deep cuts in global greenhouse gas emissions are required with a decarbonisation of the global economy over the course of this century. Accordingly, as a common vision for a global goal of greenhouse gas emissions reductions we support sharing with all parties to the UNFCCC the upper end of the latest IPCC recommendation of 40 to 70% reductions by 2050 compared to 2010 recognizing that this challenge can only be met by a global response. We commit to doing our part to achieve a low-carbon global economy in the long-term including developing and deploying innovative technologies striving

for a transformation of the energy sectors by 2050 and invite all countries to join us in this endeavor. To this end we also commit to develop long term national low-carbon strategies.

The G7 welcomes the announcement or proposal of post-2020 emission targets by all its members, as well as the submission of intended nationally determined contributions (INDC) and calls upon all countries to do so well in advance of COP21. We reaffirm our strong commitment to the Copenhagen Accord to mobilizing jointly USD 100 billion a year by 2020 from a wide variety of sources, both public and private in the context of meaningful mitigation actions and transparency on implementation.

Climate finance is already flowing at higher levels. We will continue our efforts to provide and mobilize increased finance, from public and private sources, and to demonstrate that we and others are well on our way to meet the USD 100 bn goal and that we stand ready to engage proactively in the negotiations of the finance provisions of the Paris outcome. We recognize the potential of multilateral development banks (MDBs) in delivering climate finance and helping countries transition to low carbon economies. We call on MDBs to use to the fullest extent possible their balance sheets and their capacity to mobilize other partners in support of country-led programs to meet this goal. We thank the presidency for the publication of the Background Report on Long-Term Climate Finance and call for a further exchange in all relevant fora in view of COP 21.

Mobilization of private sector capital is also crucial for achieving this commitment and unlocking the required investments in low-carbon technologies as well as in building resilience against the effects of climate change. To overcome existing investment barriers finance models with high mobilization effects are needed.

To this end, we will:

a) Intensify our support particularly for vulnerable countries' own efforts to manage climate change related disaster risk and to build resilience. We will aim to increase by up to 400 million the number of people in the most vulnerable developing countries who have access to direct or indirect insurance coverage against the negative impact of climate change related hazards by 2020 and support the development of early warning systems in the most vulnerable countries. To do so we will learn from and build on already existing risk insurance facilities such as the African Risk Capacity, the Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility and other efforts to develop insurance solutions and markets in vulnerable regions, including in small islands developing states, Africa, Asia and Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean as set out in the annex.

b) Accelerate access to renewable energy in Africa and developing countries in other regions with a view to reducing energy poverty and mobilizing substantial financial resources from private investors, development finance institutions and multilateral development banks by 2020 building on existing work and initiatives, including by the Global Innovation Lab for Climate Finance as set out in the annex.

We also reaffirm our ambition to make the Green Climate Fund fully operational in 2015 and a key institution of the future climate finance architecture.

We remain committed to the elimination of inefficient fossil fuel subsidies and encourage all countries to follow and we remain committed to continued progress in the OECD discussions on how export credits can contribute to our common goal to address climate change.

We pledge to incorporate climate mitigation and resilience considerations into our development assistance and investment decisions. We will continue our efforts to phase down hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) and call on all Parties to the Montreal Protocol to negotiate an amendment this year to phase down HFCs and on donors to assist developing countries in its implementation.

In order to incentivize investments towards low-carbon growth opportunities we commit to the long-term objective of applying effective policies and actions throughout the global economy, including carbon market-based and regulatory instruments and call on other coun-

tries to join us. We are committed to establishing a platform for a strategic dialogue on these issues based on voluntary participation and in cooperation with relevant partners, including the World Bank.

Energy

We reaffirm our commitment to the energy security principles and specific actions decided in Brussels in 2014, welcome the progress achieved since then under the Rome G7 Energy Initiative and will continue their implementation. Moreover, we welcome the G7 Hamburg Initiative for Sustainable Energy Security, in particular the additional concrete joint actions to further strengthen sustainable energy security in the G7 countries and beyond.

Notably, we reaffirm our support for Ukraine and other vulnerable countries in their ongoing efforts to reform and liberalize their energy systems and reiterate that energy should not be used as a means of political coercion or as a threat to security. We welcome the intention of the Ukrainian government to reduce energy-related subsidies and invest in energy efficiency programmes.

In addition, we intend to continue our work on assessments of energy system vulnerabilities. Moreover, we will work on strengthening the resilience and flexibility of gas markets, covering both pipeline gas and liquefied natural gas. We regard diversification as a core element of energy security and aim to further diversify the energy mix, energy fuels, sources and routes. We will strengthen cooperation in the field of energy efficiency and launch a new cooperative effort on enhancing cybersecurity of the energy sector. And we will work together and with other interested countries to raise the overall coordination and transparency of clean energy research, development and demonstration, highlighting the importance of renewable energy and other low-carbon technologies. We ask our Energy Ministers to take forward these initiatives and report back to us in 2016.

Resource Efficiency

The protection and efficient use of natural resources is vital for sustainable development. We strive to improve resource efficiency, which we consider crucial for the competitiveness of industries, for economic growth and employment, and for the protection of the environment, climate and planet. Building on the "Kobe 3R Action Plan", and on other existing initiatives, we will continue to take ambitious action to improve resource efficiency as part of broader strategies to promote sustainable materials management and material-cycle societies. We are establishing the G7-Alliance on Resource Efficiency as a forum to share knowledge and create information networks on a voluntary basis. As set out in the annex, the Alliance will collaborate with businesses, SMEs, and other relevant stakeholders to advance opportunities offered by resource efficiency, promote best practices, and foster innovation. We acknowledge the benefits of collaborating with developing countries on resource-efficiency, including through innovative public private partnerships. We ask the UNEP International Resource Panel to prepare a synthesis report highlighting the most promising potentials and solutions for resource efficiency. We further invite the OECD to develop policy guidance supplementing the synthesis report.

Protection of the Marine Environment

We acknowledge that marine litter, in particular plastic litter, poses a global challenge, directly affecting marine and coastal life and ecosystems and potentially also human health. Accordingly, increased effectiveness and intensity of work is required to combat marine litter striving to initiate a global movement. The G7 commits to priority actions and solutions to combat marine litter as set out in the annex, stressing the need to address land- and sea-based sources, removal actions, as well as education, research and outreach.

We, the G7, take note of the growing interest in deep sea mining beyond the limits of national jurisdiction and the opportunities it presents. We call on the International Seabed Authority to continue, with early involvement

of all relevant stakeholders, its work on a clear, effective and transparent code for sustainable deep sea mining, taking into account the interests of developing states. Key priorities include setting up regulatory certainty and predictability for investors and enhancing the effective protection of the marine environment from harmful effects that may arise from deep sea mining. We are committed to taking a precautionary approach in deep sea mining activities, and to conducting environmental impact assessments and scientific research.

Development

Post-2015 Agenda for Sustainable Development

2015 is a milestone year for international sustainable development issues. The Third International Conference on Financing for Development in Addis Ababa, the UN Summit for the adoption of the Post-2015 agenda in New York and the Climate Change Conference in Paris will set the global sustainable development and climate agenda for the coming years.

We are committed to achieving an ambitious, people-centred, planet-sensitive and universally applicable Post-2015 Agenda for Sustainable Development that integrates the three dimensions of sustainable development—environmental, economic and social—in a balanced manner.

The agenda should complete the unfinished business of the Millennium Development Goals, end extreme poverty, leave no-one behind, reduce inequality, accelerate the global transition to sustainable economies, promote sustainable management of natural resources, and strengthen peace, good governance and human rights. In order to mobilize appropriate action in and by all countries and by all stakeholders, we support the formulation and communication of key policy messages. We are committed to building a new global partnership based on universality, shared responsibility, mutual accountability, efficient and effective monitoring and review and a multi-stakeholder approach to our common goals of ending extreme poverty by 2030 and transitioning to sustainable development.

To help foster this new transformative agenda, we have committed to significant measures on global health, food security, climate and marine protection, sustainable supply chains and women's economic empowerment.

Collectively, we commit to supporting furthering financial and non-financial means of implementation, including through domestic resource mobilization, innovative financing, private finance, official development and other assistance and an ambitious policy framework.

We reaffirm the essential role that official development assistance (ODA) and other international public finance play as a catalyst for, and complement to, other sources of financing for development. We reaffirm our respective ODA commitments, such as the 0.7% ODA/GNI target as well as our commitment to reverse the declining trend of ODA to the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and to better target ODA towards countries where the needs are greatest. We also commit to encouraging private capital flows.

Food Security

Good governance, economic growth and better functioning markets, and investment in research and technology, together with increased domestic and private sector investment and development assistance have collectively contributed to increases in food security and improved nutrition.

As part of a broad effort involving our partner countries, and international actors, and as a significant contribution to the Post 2015 Development Agenda, we aim to lift 500 million people in developing countries out of hunger and malnutrition by 2030. The G7 Broad Food Security and Nutrition Development Approach, as set out in the annex, will make substantial contributions to these goals. We will strengthen efforts to support dynamic rural transformations, promote responsible investment and sustainable agriculture and foster multisectoral approaches to nutrition, and we aim to safeguard food security and nutrition in conflicts and crisis. We will continue to align with partner countries strategies, improve development effectiveness and strengthen the

transparent monitoring of our progress. We will ensure our actions continue to empower women, smallholders and family farmers as well as advancing and supporting sustainable agriculture and food value chains. We welcome the 2015 Expo in Milan ("Feeding the Planet—Energy for Life") and its impact on sustainable agriculture and the eradication of global hunger and malnutrition.

Women's Economic Empowerment

Women's economic participation reduces poverty and inequality, promotes growth and benefits all. Yet women regularly face discrimination which impedes economic potential, jeopardizes investment in development, and constitutes a violation of their human rights. We will support our partners in developing countries and within our own countries to overcome discrimination, sexual harassment, violence against women and girls and other cultural, social, economic and legal barriers to women's economic participation.

We recognise that being equipped with relevant skills for decent work, especially through technical and vocational education and training (TVET) via formal and non-formal learning, is key to the economic empowerment of women and girls, including those who face multiple sources of discrimination (e.g. women and girls with disabilities), and to improving their employment and entrepreneurship opportunities. We commit to increasing the number of women and girls technically and vocationally educated and trained in developing countries through G7 measures by one third (compared to "business as usual") by 2030. We will also work to increase career training and education for women and girls within G7 countries.

We will continue to take steps to foster access to quality jobs for women and to reduce the gender gap in workforce participation within our own countries by 25% by 2025, taking into account national circumstances including by improving the framework conditions to enable women and men to balance family life and employment, including access to parental leave and childcare. The private sector also has a vital role in creating an environment in which women can more meaningfully participate in the economy. We therefore support the UN Women's Empowerment Principles and call on companies worldwide to integrate them into their activities. We will coordinate our efforts through a new G7 working group on women.

CONNEX

We reaffirm our commitment to the initiative on Strengthening Assistance for Complex Contract Negotiations (CONNEX), aimed at providing multi-disciplinary expertise in developing countries for negotiating complex investment agreements, focusing initially on the extractives sector. We emphasize the three pillars of: information integration and accessibility; independence and quality of advice; and capacity building among stakeholders. We endorse the Code of Conduct for multi-disciplinary advisory services and encourage support providers and other relevant stakeholders to incorporate the Code as a set of binding principles into their contracts worldwide. We encourage pilot projects to be undertaken under the banner of the CONNEX initiative in collaboration with support providers, such as the African Legal Support Facility. We welcome further coordination on mechanisms for knowledge sharing and peer learning on the subject of negotiation support.

Deauville Partnership

We reconfirm our strong commitment to the people of the Middle East and Northern Africa (MENA). Given the current challenges in the region, we renew our commitment to the Deauville Partnership with Arab countries in transition. We support their efforts to improve governance and the rule of law and welcome the recent agreement on the Deauville Compact on Economic Governance and the Action Plan for Financial Inclusion. We further support their efforts to strengthen democracy and human rights and implement economic and social reform to achieve inclusive growth especially for women and youth, including by fostering responsible financial inclusion and facilitating the flow of remittances. The G7 remains committed to working with

governments and global financial centres to follow up on asset recovery efforts. We are convinced that, along with the Deauville partner countries, we can contribute to economic, social and political progress in the Arab countries in transition. The Transition Fund remains an important instrument for supporting country-led reform. We endorse measures to further enhance the Fund´s effectiveness, future viability, and impact. We are committed to delivering on pledges made to date and welcome additional contributions to ensure the capitalization goal is met.

G7 Accountability

We remain committed to holding ourselves accountable for the promises we have made in an open and transparent way. We welcome the Elmau Progress Report 2015 which demonstrates the progress we have made so far on our biodiversity commitment and shows how this progress contributes to other G7 development commitments. The report also stresses the need for continued action in this regard. We look forward to the next comprehensive progress report in 2016.

Conclusion

We look forward to meeting under the Presidency of Japan in 2016.

NOTE: The joint statement referred to U.N. Special Representative and Head of the U.N. Support Mission in Libya Bernardino León. An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement, which was supplemented by an annex released by the Office of the Press Secretary.

Remarks at the Catholic Health Association's Annual Assembly
June 9, 2015

Thank you. Thank you so much. Everybody, please have a seat. Thank you so much.

Well, I don't know whether this is appropriate, but I just told Sister Carol I love her. [*Laughter*] On a big stage. It is true, though. I do. She is just wonderful. Her dedication to doing God's work here on Earth, her commitment to serving "the least of these," her steadiness, her strength, her steadfast voice have been an inspiration to me. We would not have gotten the Affordable Care Act done had it not been for her. I want to thank the entire Catholic Health Association for the incredible work you do.

And it's true, I just love nuns, generally. [*Laughter*] I'm just saying. [*Laughter*]

It is an honor to join you on your 100th anniversary of bringing hope and healing to so many. I want to acknowledge Dignity Health and its CEO, Lloyd Dean, honored by the Catholic Health Association last night for his outstanding support of our efforts to improve health care in America. He has been a great friend.

I want to thank Ascension Health, a great provider of care that also recently raised its minimum wage. I want to thank Secretary Burwell and the Members of Congress who are here today, because they have been obviously doing extraordinary work.

My first job in Chicago when I moved after college to work as a community organizer—my first job was funded by the Campaign for Human Development, an antipoverty initiative of the Catholic Church. And my first office was at Holy Rosary Church on the South Side of Chicago, across from Palmer Park. You're clapping there—she knows Holy Rosary. [*Laughter*] And the task was to work with parishes and neighbors and faith and community leaders to bring low-income people together, to stitch neighborhoods together, clergy and laypeople. And the work was hard, and there were times where it was dispiriting. We had plenty of setbacks. There were times where I felt like quitting, where I wondered if the path I'd chosen was too hard.

But despite these challenges, I saw how kindness and compassion and faith can change the arc of people's lives. And I saw the power of faith: a shared belief that every human being, made in the image of God, deserves to live in dignity, and that all children, no matter who they are or where they come from or how much money they were born into, ought to have the opportunity to achieve their God-given potential; that we were—that we are all called, in the words of His Holiness Pope Francis, "to satisfy the demands of justice, fairness, and respect for every human being."

And at the time, when I had just moved to Chicago, the Cardinal there was Cardinal Bernardin, an extraordinary man. And he understood that part of that commitment, part of that commitment to the dignity of every human being also meant that we had to care about the health of every human being. And he articulated that, and the Church articulated that, as we moved at the State level in the Illinois legislature, once I was elected there later on in life, to advance the proposition that health care is not a privilege, it is a right.

And that belief is at the heart of the Catholic Health Association's mission. For decades, your member hospitals have been on the front lines, often serving the marginalized and the vulnerable and the sick and the uninsured. And that belief is at the heart of why we came together more than 5 years ago to reform our health care system, to guarantee that every American has access to quality, affordable care.

So I'm here today to say thank you for your tireless efforts to make health reform a reality. Without your commitment to compassionate care, without your moral force, we would not have succeeded. We would not have succeeded had it not been for you and the foundation you had laid.

And pursuing health care reform wasn't about making good on a campaign promise for me. It was, remember, in the wake of an economic crisis with a very human toll. And it was integral to restoring the basic promise of America, the notion that in this country, if you work hard and you take responsibility, you can get ahead. You can make it if you try. Everything we've done these past 6½ years to rebuild our economy on a new foundation, from rescuing and retooling our industries to reforming our schools to rethinking the way we produce and use energy to reducing our deficits, all of that has been in pursuit of that one goal: creating opportunity for all people. And health care reform was a critical part of that effort.

For decades, a major barrier to economic opportunity was our broken health care system. It exposed working families to the insecurities of a changing economy. It saddled our businesses with skyrocketing costs that made it hard to hire or pay a good wage. It threatened our entire Nation's long-term prosperity, was the primary driver of our deficits.

And for hospitals like yours, the fact that so many people didn't have basic care meant you were scrambling and scratching every single day to try to figure out how do we keep our doors open.

Leaders from Teddy Roosevelt to Teddy Kennedy wanted to reform it. For as long as there were Americans who couldn't afford decent health care, as long as there were people who had to choose between paying for medicine or paying the rent, as long as there were parents who had to figure out whether they could sell or borrow to pay for a child's treatment just a few months more and beg for God's mercy to make it work in time, as long as those things were happening, America was not living up to our highest ideals.

And that's why providers and faith leaders like you called for expanding access to affordable care. Every day, you saw the very personal suffering of those who go without it. And it seemed like an insurmountable challenge. Every time there was enough political will to alleviate that suffering and to reform the health care system, whether it was under Democratic Presidents or Republican Presidents, you had special interests arraying and keeping the status quo in place. And each year that passed without reform the stakes kept getting higher.

By the time I took office, thousands of Americans were losing their health insurance every single day. Many people died each year

because they didn't have health insurance. Many families who thought they had coverage were driven into bankruptcy by out-of-pocket costs. Tens of millions of our fellow citizens had no coverage at all in this, the wealthiest, most powerful nation on Earth. And despite being the only advanced economy in the world without universal health care, our health care costs grew to be the most expensive in the world with no slowing in sight. And that trend strained the budgets of families and businesses and our Government.

And so we determined that we could not keep kicking that can down the road any longer. We could not leave that problem for another generation to solve or another generation after that.

And remember, this was not easy. [*Laughter*] There were those who thought health care reform was too messy and too complicated and too politically risky. I had pollsters showing me stuff, and 85 percent of folks at any given time had health care, and so they weren't necessarily incentivized to support it. And you could scare the heck out of them about even if they weren't entirely satisfied with the existing system, that somehow it would be terrible to change it. All kinds of warning signs about how tough this was—bad politics.

But for every politician and pundit who said we should wait—"Why rush?"—barely a day went by where I didn't hear from hard-working Americans who didn't have a moment left to lose. These were men and women from all backgrounds, all walks of life, all races, all faiths, in big cities, small towns, red States, blue States. Middle class families with coverage that turned out not to be there for them when they needed it. Moms and dads desperately seeking care for a child with a chronic illness only to be told no again and again, or fearful as their child got older, what was their future going to be because they weren't going to be able to get insurance once they left the house. Small-business owners forced to choose between insuring their employees and keeping the "open" sign hanging in the window.

And every one of these stories tugged at me in a personal way, because I spoke about seeing my mom worry about how she was going to deal with her finances when she got very sick. And I was reminded of the fear that Michelle and I felt when Sasha was a few months old and we had to race to the hospital, in the emergency room learning that she had meningitis—that we caught only because we had a wonderful pediatrician and regular care. Never felt so scared or helpless in my life.

We were fortunate enough to have good health insurance. And I remember looking around in that emergency room and thinking, what about the parents who aren't that lucky? What about the parents who get hit with a bill of $20,000 or $30,000, and they've got no idea how to pay for it? What about those parents with kids who have a chronic illness like asthma and have to keep going back to the emergency room because they don't have a regular doctor, and the bills never stop coming? Who's going to stand up for them?

And behind every single story was a simple question: What kind of country do we want to be? Are we a country that's defined by values that say access to health care is a commodity awarded to only the highest bidders, or by the values that say health care is a fundamental right? Do we believe that where you start should determine how far you go, or do we believe that in the greatest nation on Earth, everybody deserves the opportunity to make it, to make of their lives what they will?

The rugged individualism that defines America has always been bound by a shared set of values, an enduring sense that we're in this together, that America is not a place where we simply turn away from the sick or turn our backs on the tired, the poor, the huddled masses. It is a place sustained by the idea, "I am my brother's keeper, I am my sister's keeper," that we have an obligation to put ourselves in our neighbor's shoes and see each other's common humanity.

And so after a century of talk, after decades of trying, after a year of sustained debate, we finally made health care reform a reality here in America.

And despite the constant doom-and-gloom predictions, the unending Chicken Little warn-

ings that somehow making health insurance fairer and easier to buy would lead to the end of freedom—[*laughter*]—the end of the American way of life, lo and behold, it did not happen. None of this came to pass. In fact, in a lot of ways, the Affordable Care Act worked out better than some of us anticipated.

Nearly one in three uninsured Americans have already been covered, more than 16 million people, driving our uninsured rate to its lowest level ever. Ever. On top of that, tens of millions more enjoy new protections with the coverage that they've already got. Those—that 85 percent who had health insurance, they may not know that they've got a better deal now than they did, but they do. Americans can no longer be denied coverage because of preexisting conditions, from you having had cancer to you having had a baby. Women can't be charged more just for being a woman. And they get free preventive services like mammograms. And there are no more annual or lifetime caps on the care patients receive.

Medicare has been strengthened and protected. We've added 13 years to its actuarial life. The financial difference for business owners trying to invest and grow and the families trying to save and spend, that's real too. Health care prices have risen at the lowest rate in 50 years. Employer premiums are rising at a rate tied for the lowest on record. The average family premium is $1,800 lower today than it would have been had trends over the decade before the ACA passed continued.

In the years to come, countless Americans who can now buy plans that are portable and affordable on a competitive marketplace will be free to chase their own ideas, unleash new enterprises across the country, knowing they'll be able to buy health insurance.

And here's the thing: That security won't just be there for us, it will be there for our kids as they go through life. When they graduate from college, they're looking for that first job, they can stay on our plans until they're 26. When they start a family, pregnancy will no longer count against them as a preexisting condition. When they change jobs or lose a job or strike out on their own to start a business, they'll still be able to get good coverage. They'll have that peace of mind all the way until they retire into a Medicare that now has cheaper prescription drugs and wellness visits to make sure that they stay healthy.

And while we were told again and again that Obamacare would be a job-killer—amazingly enough, some critics still peddle this notion—it turns out, in reality, America has experienced 63 straight months of private sector job growth, a streak that started the month we passed the Affordable Care Act. The longest streak of private sector job growth on record that adds up to 12.6 million new jobs.

So the critics stubbornly ignore reality. In reality, there is a self-employed single mom of three who couldn't afford health insurance until health reform passed and she qualified for Medicaid in her State. And she was finally able to get a mammogram, which detected early-stage breast cancer and may have saved her life. That's the reality, not the mythology.

In reality, there are parents in Texas whose autistic son couldn't speak. Even with health insurance, they struggled to pay for his treatment. But health reform meant they could buy an affordable secondary plan that covered therapy for their son, and today, that little boy can tell his parents that he loves them. That's the reality.

In reality, there's a self-employed barber from Tennessee—who happens to be a Republican—who couldn't afford health insurance until our new marketplace opened up. And once he bought a plan, he finally went to the doctor and was diagnosed with esophageal cancer. In the old days, without coverage, he wouldn't have even known that he was sick. And today, he's now cancer-free.

So 5 years in, what we are talking about it is no longer just a law. It's no longer just a theory. This isn't even just about the Affordable Care Act or Obamacare. This isn't about myths or rumors that folks try to sustain. There is a reality that people on the ground day to day are experiencing. Their lives are better.

This is now part of the fabric of how we care for one another. This is health care in America, which is why, once you get outside of Washington

and leave behind the Beltway chatter and the politics, Americans support this new reality. When you talk to people who actually are enrolled in a new marketplace plan, the vast majority of them like their coverage. The vast majority are satisfied with their choice of doctors and hospitals and satisfied with their monthly premiums. They like their reality.

Now, that doesn't mean that we don't have more work to do. Sister Carol and I were talking backstage; we know we've got more work to do. Like any serious attempt at change, there were disruptions in the rollout, there are policies we can put in place to make health care work even better. Secretary Burwell is talking about all the things we have to do together around delivery system reform. We have to protect the coverage that people have now and sign even more people up. We need more Governors and State legislatures to expand Medicaid, which was a central part of the architecture of the overall plan. We have to continue to improve the quality of care. And we know we can still bring down costs.

And none of this is going to be easy. Nobody suggests that somehow our health care system is perfect as a consequence of the law being passed, but it is serving so many more people so much better. And we're not going to go backwards. There's something, I have to say, just deeply cynical about the ceaseless, endless partisan attempts to roll back progress. I mean, I understood folks being skeptical or worried before the law passed and there wasn't a reality there to examine. But once you see millions of people of having health care, once you see that all the bad things that were predicted didn't happen, you'd think that it would be time to move on.

Let's figure out how to make it better. It seems so cynical to want to take coverage away from millions of people, to take care away from the people who need it the most, to punish millions with higher costs of care and unravel what's now been woven into the fabric of America.

And that kind of cynicism flies in the face of our history. Our history is one of each generation striving to do better and to be better than the last. Just as we'll never go back to a time when seniors were left to languish in poverty or not have any health insurance in their golden years—there was a generation that didn't have that guarantee of health care—we're not going to go back to a time when our citizens can be denied coverage because of a preexisting condition. When tens of millions of people couldn't afford decent, affordable care, that wasn't a better America. That's not freedom. The freedom to languish in illness or to be bankrupt because somebody in your family gets stick—that's not who we are. That's not what we're about.

Debra Lea Oren of Pennsylvania knows that. Debra suffers from osteoarthritis that was so severe that it put her in a wheelchair. And for years she couldn't stand or walk at all and was in constant pain, through no fault of her own, just the twists and turns of life. And without health insurance to get treatment, it seemed as though she might never again live a life that was full. Today, Debra is enrolled in affordable health coverage, was able to have surgery to replace her knees. She's back on her feet. She walks her dogs, shops at the grocery store, gets to her doctor's appointments. She's cooking, she's exercising, regaining her health.

Debra couldn't be here today, but she recently wrote to me, and she said: "I walk with my husband Michael and hold hands. It's like a whole new world for me." Just walking and holding hands, something that one of our fellow Americans for years could not do.

Every day, miracles happen in your hospitals. But remaking Debra's world didn't require a miracle. It just required that Debra have access to something that she and every other American has a right to expect, which is health care coverage.

And while there are outcomes that we can calculate and enumerate—the number of newly insured families, the number of lives saved—and those numbers all add up to success in this reform effort. But there are also outcomes that are harder to calculate: in the tally of pain and tragedy and bankruptcies that have been averted, but also in the security of a parent who can afford to take her kid to the

doctor, or the dignity of a grandfather who can get the preventive care that he needs, or the freedom of an entrepreneur who can start a new venture, or the joy of a wife who thought she'd never again take her husband's hand and go for a walk.

In the end, that's why you do what you do. Isn't that what this is all about? Is there any greater measure of life and liberty and the pursuit of happiness than those simple pleasures that are afforded because you have good health and you have some security?

More than 5 years ago, I said that while I was not the first President to take up this cause, I was determined to be the last. And now it's up to all of us, the citizens in this room and across the country, to continue to help make the right to health care a reality for all Americans. And if we keep faith with one another and keep working for each other to create opportunity for everybody who strives for it, then, in the words of Senator Ted Kennedy, "the dream will be fulfilled for this generation, and preserved and enlarged for generations to come."

It couldn't have happened without you.

Thank you. God bless you all. Thank you so much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:58 a.m. at the Washington Marriott Wardman Park hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Carol Keehan, president and chief executive officer, Catholic Health Association of the United States.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Actions and Policies of Certain Members of the Government of Belarus and Other Persons To Undermine Belarus's Democratic Processes or Institutions

June 10, 2015

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency with respect to the actions and policies of certain members of the Government of Belarus and other persons to undermine Belarus's democratic processes or institutions that was declared in Executive Order 13405 of June 16, 2006, is to continue in effect beyond June 16, 2015.

The actions and policies of certain members of the Government of Belarus and other persons to undermine Belarus's democratic processes or institutions, to commit human rights abuses related to political repression, and to engage in public corruption continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. For this reason, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13405 with respect to Belarus.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
June 10, 2015.

NOTE: The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on the Global Deployment of United States Combat-Equipped Armed Forces
June 11, 2015

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

I am providing this supplemental consolidated report, prepared by my Administration and consistent with the War Powers Resolution (Public Law 93–148), as part of my efforts to keep the Congress informed about deployments of U.S. Armed Forces equipped for combat.

MILITARY OPERATIONS IN SUPPORT OF U.S. COUNTERTERRORISM OBJECTIVES

In furtherance of U.S. counterterrorism efforts, the United States continues to work with partners around the globe, with a particular focus on the U.S. Central Command's and U.S. Africa Command's areas of responsibility. In this context, the United States has deployed U.S. combat-equipped forces to enhance the counterterrorism capabilities and support the counterterrorism operations of our friends and allies. Specific information about counterterrorism deployments to select countries is provided below, and a classified annex to this report provides further information.

Military Operations Against al-Qa'ida, the Taliban, and Associated Forces and in Support of Related U.S. Counterterrorism Objectives

Since October 7, 2001, U.S. Armed Forces, including special operations forces, have conducted counterterrorism combat operations in Afghanistan against al-Qa'ida, the Taliban, and associated forces. In support of these and other overseas operations, the United States has deployed combat-equipped forces to a number of locations in the U.S. Central, Pacific, European, Southern, and Africa Command areas of operation. Such operations and deployments have been reported previously, consistent with Public Law 107–40 and the War Powers Resolution, and operations and deployments remain ongoing. These operations, which the United States has carried out with the assistance of numerous international partners, have been successful in seriously degrading al-Qa'ida's capabilities and brought an end to the Taliban's rule in Afghanistan. If necessary, in response to terrorist threats, I will direct additional measures to protect U.S. citizens and interests. It is not possible to know at this time the precise scope or the duration of the deployments of U.S. Armed Forces necessary to counter terrorist threats to the United States.

Afghanistan. United States Armed Forces have transitioned the lead for security to Afghan security forces while striking significant blows against al-Qa'ida's leadership and preventing Afghanistan from being used to launch attacks against our homeland. As I previously announced, the U.S. combat mission in Afghanistan ended on December 31, 2014; however, a limited number of U.S. forces remain in Afghanistan for the purposes of training, advising, and assisting Afghan forces, conducting and supporting counterterrorism operations against the remnants of al-Qa'ida, and taking appropriate measures against Taliban members who directly threaten U.S. and coalition forces in Afghanistan or provide direct support to al-Qa'ida. The United States currently remains in an armed conflict against al-Qa'ida, the Taliban, and associated forces, and active hostilities against those groups remain ongoing.

Following the completion of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission at the end of 2014, the mission to help train, advise, and assist the Afghan National Security Forces and Afghan ministries and institutions continues through the follow-on North Atlantic Treaty Organization-led Resolute Support Mission. The United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 2189, dated December 12, 2014, which welcomed the Resolute Support Mission and underscored the importance of continued in-

ternational support for the stability of Afghanistan.

Today, there are approximately 9,100 U.S. forces in Afghanistan, consistent with the Force Management Level of 9,800. (The actual number of U.S. military personnel in Afghanistan may exceed this Force Management Level due to, for example, overlap during rotations of units, and the continued presence of forces with the single mission of supporting the retrograde of U.S. equipment, both of which are excluded from counting against the Force Management Level.)

Iraq and Syria. In order to provide support and security to U.S. personnel and the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad and as part of a comprehensive strategy to degrade and ultimately defeat the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), last year I authorized the deployment of U.S. Armed Forces to Iraq. These U.S. forces are conducting coordination with Iraqi forces and providing training, communications support, intelligence support, and other support to select elements of the Iraqi security forces, including Kurdish Peshmerga forces. Additionally, U.S. forces are conducting a systematic campaign of airstrikes and other necessary actions against ISIL forces in Iraq and Syria and airstrikes in Syria against operatives of al-Qa'ida, including members of the al-Qa'ida element known as the Khorasan Group, who are involved in al-Qa'ida's plotting against the West. The Force Management Level for U.S. Armed Forces in Iraq currently is 3,550 personnel. Additionally, on May 15, 2015, U.S. forces conducted a raid in Syria to capture a senior leader of ISIL known as Abu Sayyaf who was involved in directing the terrorist organization's illicit oil, gas, and financial operations, and his wife, known as Umm Sayyaf, who is also suspected to be a member of ISIL. The operation resulted in Abu Sayyaf's death and Umm Sayyaf's capture.

These actions are being undertaken in coordination with and at the request of the Government of Iraq and in conjunction with coalition partners.

Somalia. In Somalia, U.S. forces have worked to counter the terrorist threat posed by al-Qa'ida and associated elements of al-Shabaab. United States forces conducted counterterrorism strikes in Somalia on December 29, 2014, and January 31 and March 12, 2015, against al-Shabaab operatives who are part of al-Qa'ida.

Yemen. The U.S. military has also been working closely with the Government of Yemen to operationally dismantle and ultimately eliminate the terrorist threat posed by al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), the most active and dangerous affiliate of al-Qa'ida today. Our joint efforts have resulted in direct action against a limited number of AQAP operatives and senior leaders in that country who posed a terrorist threat to the United States and our interests.

Djibouti. United States forces continue to partner with Government of Djibouti authorities, which have permitted use of Djiboutian territory for basing of U.S. forces. United States forces remain deployed to Djibouti, including for purposes of posturing for counterterrorism operations in the Horn of Africa and Arabian Peninsula.

Cuba. Combat-equipped forces, deployed since January 2002 to the Naval Base, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, continue to conduct humane and secure detention operations for the approximately 122 detainees at Guantanamo Bay under the authority provided by the 2001 Authorization for the Use of Military Force (Public Law 107–40), as informed by the law of war.

Military Operations in Niger in Support of U.S. Counterterrorism Objectives

United States military personnel in Niger continue to provide support for intelligence collection and to facilitate intelligence sharing with French forces conducting operations in the Sahel and with other partners in the region. The total number of U.S. military personnel deployed to Niger is approximately 200.

MILITARY OPERATIONS RELATED TO THE LORD'S RESISTANCE ARMY

United States military personnel with appropriate combat equipment remain deployed to

various countries in the central Africa region to serve as advisors to regional forces of the African Union Regional Task Force (AU–RTF) that are working to apprehend or remove Joseph Kony and other senior Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) leaders from the battlefield, and to protect local populations. The number of U.S. military personnel deployed to the central Africa region, including advisors deployed for this mission and personnel providing logistical and support functions to this and other missions, will fluctuate at a level up to approximately 300. Additional information about military operations related to the Lord's Resistance Army is provided in the classified annex.

MILITARY OPERATIONS IN EGYPT

Approximately 700 military personnel are assigned to the U.S. contingent of the Multinational Force and Observers, which have been present in Egypt since 1981.

MILITARY OPERATIONS IN JORDAN

As initially detailed in my report of June 21, 2013, at the request of the Government of Jordan, U.S. Armed Forces elements, including Patriot missile systems, fighter aircraft, and related support, command, control, and communications personnel and systems, are deployed to Jordan to support the security of Jordan and promote regional stability. The total number of U.S. forces in Jordan is approximately 2,200 U.S. military personnel. These forces will remain in Jordan, in full coordination with the Government of Jordan, until the security situation becomes such that they are no longer needed.

U.S./NATO OPERATIONS IN KOSOVO

The U.N. Security Council authorized Member States to establish a NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR) in Resolution 1244 on June 10, 1999. The original mission of KFOR was to monitor, verify, and, when necessary, enforce compliance with the Military Technical Agreement between NATO and the then-Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (now Serbia), while maintaining a safe and secure environment. Today, KFOR deters renewed hostilities in cooperation with local authorities, bilateral partners, and international institutions. The principal military tasks of KFOR forces are to help maintain a safe and secure environment and to ensure freedom of movement throughout Kosovo. The U.S. contribution to KFOR is approximately 700 U.S. military personnel out of the total strength of approximately 4,600 personnel.

REGIONAL SECURITY OPERATIONS

United States Armed Forces previously deployed to Yemen to support the security of U.S. personnel and the U.S. Embassy departed Yemen in conjunction with the suspension of embassy operations and relocation of embassy staff out of Yemen in February 2015. Also, as most recently reported in the December 11, 2014, consolidated report, U.S. Armed Forces deployed to the Central African Republic in September 2014 to support the resumption of the activities of the U.S. Embassy in Bangui. Those forces departed the Central African Republic in January 2015.

I have directed the participation of U.S. Armed Forces in all of these operations pursuant to my constitutional and statutory authority as Commander in Chief and as Chief Executive (including the authority to carry out Public Law 107–40 and other statutes), as well as my constitutional and statutory authority to conduct the foreign relations of the United States. Officials of my Administration and I communicate regularly with the leadership and other Members of Congress with regard to these deployments, and we will continue to do so.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to John A. Boehner, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Orrin G. Hatch, President pro tempore of the Senate.

Statement on House of Representatives Action on Trade Promotion Authority and Trade Adjustment Assistance Legislation
June 12, 2015

Today Republicans and Democrats in the House of Representatives voted to help the United States negotiate and enforce strong, high-standard trade deals that are good for American workers and good for American businesses. That's a good thing. My top priority as President is to grow the economy and open new avenues of opportunity for hard-working Americans. And today's new economy demands we encourage new sources of growth and job creation so that America remains vital, dynamic, and on the cutting edge. That's what smart new trade agreements can do, agreements for fair and free trade that level the playing field for our workers, open new markets for our businesses, and hold other countries to the kinds of high standards that Americans are proud to hold ourselves to here at home. These kinds of agreements reflect the realities of a 21st-century economy. These kinds of agreements make sure that the global economy's rules aren't written by countries like China, they're written by the United States of America. And to stand in their way is to do nothing but preserve the long-term status quo for American workers and make it even harder for them to succeed.

Trade promotion authority (TPA) will expand workers' rights, it will protect the environment, it will promote a free and open Internet, and it will support robust new measures to crack down on countries that break the rules, the same way we've brought dozens of new trade cases over the past 6 years and won again and again. But as I've said before, new trade agreements should go hand in hand with support to American workers who've been harmed by trade in the past. Trade adjustment assistance (TAA) is an initiative that would give roughly 100,000 American workers access to vital support each year. But it's currently scheduled to expire soon. Republicans and Democrats in the Senate have renewed it. Republicans and Democrats in the House failed to renew it today, and that inaction will directly hurt about 100,000 workers and their communities annually if those Members of Congress don't reconsider. I urge the House to pass TAA without delay so that more middle class workers can earn the chance to participate and succeed in our global economy.

I thank the bipartisan group of Representatives who came together on behalf of America's workers, our businesses, and our economy. And I urge the House of Representatives to pass TAA as soon as possible so I can sign them both and give our workers and businesses even more wind at their backs to do what they do best: imagine, invent, build, and sell goods made in America to the rest of the world.

NOTE: The statement referred to H.R. 1314.

The President's Weekly Address
June 13, 2015

Hi, everybody. My top priority as President is to grow the economy and help more hard-working Americans get ahead. And after the worst economic crisis in our lifetimes, our businesses have now created 12.6 million new jobs over the past 63 months.

That's a record streak of job creation. And it's come as we've been working to reform our schools, revitalize manufacturing and the auto industry, revamp our job training programs, and rework our health care system, covering more than 16 million uninsured Americans so far.

We've done all of this to rebuild our economy on a new foundation, a foundation for growth that benefits not only us, but our kids and their kids. Because we do live in a new economy. And we've got to adapt to make sure

America leads the way in this new century, just like we did in the last.

Part of that means sparking new sources of growth and job creation that keep us on the cutting edge. And one big way to do that is through smart new trade agreements that level the playing field for our workers, open new markets for our businesses, and hold other countries to the kinds of high standards that Americans are proud to hold ourselves to here at home.

Simply put, America has to write the rules of the 21st-century economy in a way that benefits American workers. If we don't, countries like China will write those rules in a way that benefits their workers.

Now, on Friday, Republicans and Democrats in the House of Representatives voted to help the United States negotiate new trade deals that are both free and fair, deals that expand opportunity for our workers and our businesses alike. And that's good. These kinds of trade deals say no to a race for the bottom, for lower wages and working conditions. They're about starting a race to the top, for higher wages and better working conditions, stronger environmental protections, and a smarter way to crack down on countries that break the rules of the global economy.

But that's not all we should be doing for our workers. Right now something called trade adjustment assistance provides vital support, like job training and community college education, to tens of thousands of American workers each year who were hurt by past trade deals, the kind that we're not going to repeat again. Republicans and Democrats in the Senate have voted to renew this initiative, but so far, the House of Representatives has chosen to let it expire in just a few months, leaving as many as 100,000 American workers on their own. For the sake of those workers, their families, and their communities, I urge those Members of Congress who voted against trade adjustment assistance to reconsider and stand up for American workers.

Because these smart new trade deals aren't just about growing our economy and supporting good new American jobs, it's about the kind of country we want to build for our kids and our grandkids. And if I did not think that smart new trade deals were the right thing to do for working families, I wouldn't be fighting for it.

This is the right thing to do. Trade that's fair and free and smart will grow opportunity for our middle class. It will help us restore the dream we share and make sure that every American who works hard has a chance to get ahead. That's a cause worth fighting for, today and every day I have the honor of serving as your President.

Thanks, everybody, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 3:55 p.m. on June 12 in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House for broadcast on June 13. In the address, the President referred to H.R. 1314. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 12, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on June 13.

Remarks at the White House Mentorship and Leadership Program Graduation Ceremony
June 15, 2015

Hello, everybody. Everybody, please, please, have a seat, have a seat. Well, I couldn't tell—I couldn't let these young men leave without having a chance to say goodbye.

Over the past year, I've had a chance to spend some time with these outstanding young men. I crashed their résumé workshop in the Roosevelt Room. We had lunch in the Diplomatic Room, and most of us didn't spill too much stuff on our ties. [*Laughter*] I showed them which fork to use. [*Laughter*] They showed me a thing or two on the basketball

court. So this has been a great, mutual learning relationship between me and these outstanding young people.

And I've gotten so much out of the conversation, because it's been a privilege to hear about their lives and their families and their hopes and their dreams and a few fears too. The good news is, they're all dreaming big and they're dreaming smart. They know that it's going to take a lot of hard work and perseverance and integrity to get to where they want to be. They know they're going to face some obstacles along the way, sometimes some discouragement, because all too often the world underestimates young men like these. They know that their stories and their success can also help change the narrative. And that's a responsibility that each of them have, but it's one that they're willing to shoulder and, I'm confident, one that they're going to do a great job pulling off.

One of these young men, Gerard, told me that his goal was to become the Attorney General of the United States. [*Laughter*] And I told him, well, that's a big goal. I wasn't sure whether he understood how big it was. I did tell him he was probably going to have to get a new hairdo if he wanted to be Attorney General. [*Laughter*] And then I walked him through all the other steps: He had to go to college; he had to graduate from college; you had to take the L–S–A–T, the LSAT; you had to get into a law school. You had to then pass the bar and do the work as an attorney and then potentially join the U.S. Attorney's Office and work your way up. I took 10 minutes just going through the whole path that it might take for you to become the Attorney General. And I thought maybe that would make Gerard back off a little bit. Instead, he said, "Okay." [*Laughter*] He didn't seem too fazed by it. And then, a couple weeks later, he spent the day shadowing Eric Holder, who has been an outstanding Attorney General, and apparently, he still wasn't fazed.

So it gives you a sense of the kind of young men we're talking about. We've got people here who are interested in being engineers. We've got young men who are already participating through the ROTC and are interested in serving their country in the military. We've got young people who are interested in the sciences and had some pretty fancy experiments that they were trying to explain to me that I wasn't exactly clear about, but sounded very impressive. [*Laughter*] We've got a few folks who are student-athletes and are looking to get scholarships, but understand that, as we discussed, the odds of you becoming a doctor or a lawyer or a school principal are a lot higher than you being in the NBA, so you want to make sure that you're not putting all your eggs in that basket.

And throughout this process, what I've been most encouraged by is just how resilient these young people are. And that's not just a credit to them, it's a credit to everybody who encouraged them and loved them and supported them. So I want to give it up to all the moms and dads, grandparents, teachers, coaches, mentors who have poured their love into these young people, made sure they know that they matter and they can do anything. Give them a big round of applause. [*Applause*] Good job.

I want to say a special congratulations to our graduating seniors. Every—[*applause*]. Yay! Every single one of them is going to college in the fall. And I'm going to give each of them a special shout-out.

So we've got Mike Belay is headed to George Mason University. Mike. Chuck Edmunds will be in the honors engineering program at Morgan State University. Yay! Jonathan Larrain will study business at Northern Virginia Community College. Jerron Hawkins is sticking around here and going to Howard University. Noah McQueen is going to Morehouse College, going to be a Morehouse man. Bernard Mkumbuzi is studying engineering at East Carolina University. Marcus Russell will attend Virginia State University, VSU. Malik Brooks is going to West Virginia Wesleyan College. And Joseph West is heading to Morgan State University.

So the seniors are launched. They're well on their way. And then, we've got our outstanding juniors here, all who took college-prep classes and took the SATs, and so they're in the process of applying, just like Malia. And I know it's going to be nerve racking—[*laughter*]—but they're handling their business. And so we're

proud of them too. And those juniors, you've got a big year ahead of you, but we know you've got what it takes: intelligence, character, and a good sense of humor. So I'm confident that you guys are going to do great.

I told these young men as we were taking pictures before we came out that I could not be prouder of how they conducted themselves. This—we're just in the process now of starting to expand our mentee program not just here at the White House, but through "My Brother's Keeper." We're trying to expand this all across the country, because what we know is, when we give outstanding young people like this a chance, they can succeed. They just need a little bit of help. They just need a little bit of encouragement. Maybe a contact here or two. A mentor who is willing to show them the ropes. Somebody who is helping them to set their sights high.

And so what I told them is that although they will not be White House mentees after this class, they will always be part of my family and those mentors in our administration who are with them. And so they will continue to be able to count on us to help smooth out some of those rough patches and to get the kind of support that they need to continue to succeed. So I'm not going anywhere for at least 18 months—[*laughter*]—but after that, Michelle and I and Broderick and others who have been involved in this program, we intend to continue to help support young people.

Now, as we've always said, there's mutual responsibilities involved. So just as we're going to continue to be there for you, we expect you to continue to not only work hard and apply yourself, but also to help reach back and provide the kind of leadership and guidance. We want you to be role models for the young people that are coming behind you, starting obviously with your brothers and sisters, but then continuing to expand to others who may not have always had the same opportunities that you've had. And you've got to make sure that you're helping to not only conduct yourself in a way that gives them an idea of what it takes to succeed, but that you're also being hands on in helping them wherever you can.

One of the things that I think we all have to understand as a country is that we all do better when everybody has a shot. This idea that somehow we succeed just on our own is just not true. Nobody does, not even the President of the United States, maybe especially not the President of the United States. There are thousands, tens of thousands of people—starting with my parents, and now my family—but tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands of people who helped me succeed and continue to help me succeed every single day. And that's the nature of how any society works is, we support each other. And so you've got to, as beneficiaries of a lot of support from some wonderful family members, you've got to make sure that you are showing that same leadership going forward. All right?

Couldn't be prouder of you. I can't wait to see all the great things that you're going to achieve. Congratulations. And, parents, way to go. Good job. All right. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:24 p.m. in the Blue Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gerard Contee, student, McKiley Technology Education Campus in Washington, DC; and Cabinet Secretary Broderick D. Johnson, in his capacity as Chair of the "My Brother's Keeper" Task Force.

Message to the Congress Transmitting a Proposed Agreement for Cooperation Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Republic of Korea Concerning Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy
June 16, 2015

To the Congress of the United States:

I am pleased to transmit to the Congress, pursuant to sections 123 b. and 123 d. of the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, as amended (42 U.S.C. 2153(b), (d)) (the "Act"), the text of a

proposed Agreement for Cooperation Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Republic of Korea Concerning Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy (the "Agreement"). I am also pleased to transmit my written approval, authorization, and determination concerning the proposed Agreement, and an unclassified Nuclear Proliferation Assessment Statement (NPAS) concerning the proposed Agreement. (In accordance with section 123 of the Act, as amended by Title XII of the Foreign Affairs Reform and Restructuring Act of 1998 (Public Law 105–277), two classified annexes to the NPAS, prepared by the Secretary of State, in consultation with the Director of National Intelligence, summarizing relevant classified information, will be submitted to the Congress separately.) The joint memorandum submitted to me by the Secretaries of State and Energy and a letter from the Chairman of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission stating the views of the Commission are also enclosed. An addendum to the NPAS containing a comprehensive analysis of the export control system of the Republic of Korea (ROK) with respect to nuclear-related matters, including interactions with other countries of proliferation concern and the actual or suspected nuclear, dual-use, or missile-related transfers to such countries, pursuant to section 102A(w) of the National Security Act of 1947 (50 U.S.C. 3024(w)), is being submitted separately by the Director of National Intelligence.

The proposed Agreement has been negotiated in accordance with the Act and other applicable law. In my judgment, it meets all applicable statutory requirements and will advance the nonproliferation and other foreign policy interests of the United States.

The proposed Agreement contains all of the requirements established by section 123 a. of the Act. It provides a comprehensive framework for peaceful nuclear cooperation with the ROK based on a mutual commitment to nuclear nonproliferation. It would permit the transfer of material, equipment (including reactors), components, information, and technology for nuclear research and nuclear power production. It would not permit the transfer of Restricted Data, and sensitive nuclear technology or technology or information that is not in the public domain concerning fabrication of nuclear fuel containing plutonium could only be transferred if specifically provided by an amendment to the proposed Agreement or a separate agreement. Any special fissionable material transferred could only be in the form of low enriched uranium, with two exceptions: small quantities of material for use as samples; or for other specified applications such as use in loading and operation of fast reactors or the conduct of fast reactor experiments. The proposed Agreement would also obligate the United States to endeavor to take such actions as may be necessary and feasible to ensure a reliable supply of low enriched uranium fuel to the ROK, similar to terms contained in other recent civil nuclear cooperation agreements.

The proposed Agreement would also establish a new standing High-Level Bilateral Commission (HLBC) to be led by the Deputy Secretary of Energy for the Government of the United States of America and the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs for the Government of the ROK. The purpose of the HLBC is to facilitate peaceful nuclear and strategic cooperation between the parties and ongoing dialogue regarding areas of mutual interest in civil nuclear energy, including the civil nuclear fuel cycle.

The proposed Agreement will have an initial term of 20 years and would renew for one additional period of 5 years unless either party gives written notice at least 2 years prior to its expiration that it does not want to renew the proposed Agreement. The proposed Agreement also requires the parties to consult as soon as possible after the seventeenth anniversary of its entry into force to decide whether to pursue an extension of the proposed Agreement. In the event of termination of the proposed Agreement, key nonproliferation conditions and controls will continue in effect as long as any nuclear material, moderator material, byproduct material, equipment, or component subject to the proposed Agreement remains in the territory of the party concerned or

under its jurisdiction or control anywhere, or until such time as the parties agree that, in the case of nuclear material or moderator material, such items are no longer usable for any nuclear activity relevant from the point of view of international safeguards or have become practically irrecoverable, or in the case of equipment, components, or byproduct material, such items are no longer usable for nuclear purposes.

The ROK has a strong track record on nonproliferation and its government has consistently reiterated its commitment to nonproliferation. The ROK is a party to the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, has an International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards agreement and Additional Protocol in force, is a member of the four multilateral nonproliferation export control regimes (Missile Technology Control Regime, Wassenaar Arrangement, Australia Group, and Nuclear Suppliers Group, for which it served as Chair in 2003–2004 and is scheduled to do so again in 2015–2016), and is an active participant in the Proliferation Security Initiative. A more detailed discussion of the ROK's civil nuclear program and its nuclear nonproliferation policies and practices, including its nuclear export policies and practices, is provided in the NPAS and in two classified annexes to the NPAS submitted to you separately. As noted above, the Director of National Intelligence will provide an addendum to the NPAS containing a comprehensive analysis of the export control system of the ROK with respect to nuclear-related matters.

I have considered the views and recommendations of the interested departments and agencies in reviewing the proposed Agreement and have determined that its performance will promote, and will not constitute an unreasonable risk to, the common defense and security. Accordingly, I have approved the proposed Agreement and authorized its execution and urge that the Congress give it favorable consideration.

This transmission shall constitute a submittal for purposes of both sections 123 b. and 123 d. of the Act. My Administration is prepared to begin immediately the consultations with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the House Foreign Affairs Committee as provided in section 123 b. Upon completion of the 30 days of continuous session review provided for in section 123 b., the 60 days of continuous session review provided for in section 123 d. shall commence.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
June 16, 2015.

Remarks at an Investiture Ceremony for Attorney General Loretta E. Lynch
June 17, 2015

Thank you, everybody. Thank you so much. Everybody, please have a seat. I was telling Loretta backstage, a little pomp and circumstance never hurts. [*Laughter*]

Justice Sonia Sotomayor is here. I want to congratulate Deputy Attorney General Sally Yates on her confirmation. She is here somewhere. There she is. And I want to thank the elected officials who are here today, the family and the friends, colleagues.

At long last, I'm so proud to be here for the installation of our 83d Attorney General of the United States, Loretta Lynch.

We want to welcome Loretta's family—her husband, Stephen Hargrove; her father, Reverend Lorenzo Lynch. We want to say to Mrs. Lynch as well, thank you so much for your appearance.

As I said when I nominated Loretta, in a country built on the rule of law, there are few, perhaps no, offices more important than that of Attorney General. The person in this position is the American people's lawyer, tasked with enforcing our Federal laws and making sure they're applied evenly and equally.

And that's the legacy of Eric Holder. We are grateful for his outstanding service as one of

the longest serving Attorney Generals in our history. And I want to thank his wonderful wife, Dr. Sharon Malone, who's here today. Where's Sharon at? There she is.

As Attorney General, Eric was driven by his fundamental belief that justice is not an abstraction, it's a very real and tangible way that our laws interact with people in their daily lives. And the good news is, Loretta shares that belief.

She brings her own unique style of leadership. She brings a wealth of experience to the Justice Department at a time when there is so much work to be done, from keeping us safe from terrorist attacks to protecting our financial system to safeguarding our environment to upholding civil rights. And all of you at the Justice Department, public servants who do incredible work day in and day out, could not ask for a better leader.

Many of you know Loretta's story. Born in segregated Greensboro, North Carolina, Loretta was raised by a fourth-generation Baptist minister and a school librarian, both of whom don't seem to mind speaking their minds—[*laughter*]—that's just my quick impression—[*laughter*]—and more importantly, taught Loretta the value of speaking up for what's right.

As a young girl, she'd go to the Durham courthouse with her father and watch court proceedings, and he'd tell her stories about her grandfather, who risked everything to protect Black people who found themselves caught up with the law, but had almost no recourse under Jim Crow. And he did this with only a third grade education, proving to Loretta that, no matter what our circumstances, we all have the power to make a difference in the lives of others.

So it's clear that both her parents had a huge influence on Loretta. They are her biggest cheerleaders. Apparently, when she applied to work at the U.S. Attorney's Office and a FBI agent went to their house to conduct a routine background check, her parents pulled out a bunch of scrapbooks of Loretta's accomplishments—[*laughter*]—made the agents look through them. [*Laughter*] I'm sure Loretta was mortified. [*Laughter*] "And here in third grade, she got the prize." [*Laughter*] "And here's one of her old poems." [*Laughter*] I can just picture the FBI agent sitting there, "Yes, ma'am." [*Laughter*]

So the agent later told Loretta that she probably wasn't a threat to America because if she were, "her parents would have documented it in some way." [*Laughter*] That's something I can appreciate as a father. [*Laughter*]

So Loretta seized the opportunities that her family gave her to build a distinguished life in public service. After Harvard College and Harvard Law School, she rose to become a strong, independent prosecutor. Loretta spent years in the trenches battling terrorism and financial fraud and cybercrime. She went from the Assistant U.S. Attorney's Office in the Eastern District of New York to Chief of the Long Island Office—[*applause*]—Chief Assistant U.S. Attorney—Long Island in the House! And then U.S. Attorney.

She chased public corruption. She helped secure billions in settlements from some of the world's biggest banks accused of fraud. She jailed some of New York's most notorious and violent mobsters and gang members. She pursued some of the world's most dangerous terrorists and cyber criminals.

The law is her map; justice, her compass. She is tough, but she is fair. She is firm, but kind. Her intelligence and her judgment, her grace under fire have earned the trust and admiration of those she works with and those she serves and even those she goes up against.

In fact, it's funny that we are "installing" Loretta today—it's not like she's been waiting around for the embossed invitation. She hit the ground running from day one. She's already made her mark here at home and abroad because of her laser focus on the core mission of the Justice Department: the protection of the American people.

And she understands the importance of policing and improving relationships between law enforcement and communities. She went on a six-city tour to spotlight the challenges in community policing and the progress that's being made. She understands the importance of criminal justice reform: that we have to be smart on crime, not just tough. That's why

she's committed to working as a partner to leaders with both parties who want to pursue reform that continues the trend of a falling crime rate and a falling incarceration rate.

She understands the importance of protecting our national security while also securing our civil liberties. That's why she will safeguard the programs that are critical to protecting American lives and Americans' privacy. I see our FBI Director, Jim Comey, who's here, and I know he's committed to doing the same thing.

She lives out the words of one of our greatest Attorney Generals, Robert F. Kennedy: "The glory of justice and the majesty of the law are created not just by the Constitution, nor by the courts, nor by the officers of the law, nor by the lawyers, but by the men and women who constitute our society—who are protectors of the law as they are themselves protected by the law."

That's always been the story of our Nation. Our strength does not come from the words we've written on the page or the laws we've put down on the books. It comes from ordinary citizens, generation after generation, who do their part to uphold our founding ideals. It comes from an unshakable faith in our ability to stand up for what is right and to admit where we've fallen short and then choose a better way forward.

That was the cause to which Loretta dedicated her life long before she became America's top law enforcement officer. Today, the American people can have no greater advocate for their right to equality under the law, no greater partner in securing justice for all than our Attorney General, Loretta Lynch.

[*At this point, Supreme Court Associate Justice Sonia M. Sotomayor administered the oath of office. Attorney General Lynch then made remarks.*]

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:24 a.m. at the Warner Theatre. In his remarks, he referred to Lorine Lynch, mother of Attorney General Lynch. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Attorney General Lynch.

Statement on the Observance of Ramadan
June 17, 2015

As the new crescent Moon brings in the holy month of Ramadan, Michelle and I send our warmest greetings to all those observing the month of fasting in the United States and around the world. Ramadan is a time in which families and communities come together for iftars and prayers in festive gatherings that demonstrate the rich and diverse traditions of Muslim societies and cultures.

It is also a deeply spiritual time of reflection and renewal meant to increase thankfulness and consciousness of God's mercy. Muslims honor each day of Ramadan as a day of patient endurance through fasting, and each night as a night of gratitude through prayers. It is a time to reinforce faith, compassion and forgiveness, and perseverance through adversity. In this month of giving, Muslims around the globe reach out to assist those afflicted by conflict, hunger, poverty, and disease. And here in the United States, American Muslims join their fellow citizens to serve the less fortunate, hosting interfaith activities that build understanding and remind us that we stand together as one American family. The diversity and patriotism of America's religious communities give strength to all of us, and our freedom to worship reminds us of the values we share.

I once again look forward to welcoming American Muslims to the White House for our annual White House iftar dinner to honor the month of Ramadan and recognize the service of American Muslims from across the country. From my family to yours, *Ramadan Kareem.*

Remarks at the Congressional Picnic
June 17, 2015

[*As the President approached the podium, he pointed to the Presidential seal.*]

The President. That's right. It's the one with the sign on it there. [*Laughter*]

Audience member. Yeah!

The President. How is everybody doing today? Well, I want to welcome everybody to the South Lawn. And usually, it's broiling hot when we have our congressional picnic, so this is one of those days where we actually welcome a little cloud cover.

I'm going to be very brief because I want to shake as many hands as I can, although I want to warn in advance, I can't do a selfie with everybody. [*Laughter*]

Audience member. How about a kiss?

The President. A kiss I can give you. [*Laughter*]

The—my main message is, as is always true at this wonderful event, is just to say thank you. America faces enormous challenges. We face the challenge of making sure that the economy works for everybody and everybody has opportunity. We have international challenges from terrorism to climate change. But the thing that always gives me confidence that we're going to meet these challenges is because the American people are good and they are decent, and we've got a democracy that, as frustrating and messy as it can be sometimes, still represents the best hope for freedom and prosperity for any society.

And we are the longest continuous democracy on Earth. We have set the model and the tone for people around the world who aspire to the values that we cherish so dearly. There's a reason why, from every corner of the globe, striving, hopeful, talented people still want to come to the United States of America. And our job, together—mine as President and those of you who are serving in Congress—is to make sure that we are true to that commitment and true to those values.

And obviously, democracy can be contentious. There are times where people have deep, principled disagreements. But I hope that events like today remind us that ultimately, we're all on the same team, and that's the American team.

I also want to say thank you to the families, because there is enormous burdens that are placed on the spouses and the children of those who serve in Congress. I know—and Michelle knows really well—the nature of those burdens. And for you to sacrifice in your own ways is the only way that we are able to serve. And so we are very, very grateful for your support and your sacrifice.

And for the members of the staffs who are here, we want to say thank you as well, because you make us look good. And you have all the sacrifices, but you don't always get the attention. And we know that you work really, really hard to make this possible as well. So we are grateful to you.

So I want everybody to have fun. Eat up. And I do want to also say how wildly impressed I was at the quality of baseball when I went out to Nat Stadium the other day. You guys actually looked like you knew what you were doing! [*Laughter*] Flake, I saw you, man, at bat. You were all right. [*Laughter*]

So enjoy. Thank you. God bless you guys. Thank you. Oh, and can everybody please give it up for our outstanding Marine Band? They're the best. They can play anything!

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:37 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Sen. Jeffrey L. Flake.

Remarks on the Shooting in Charleston, South Carolina
June 18, 2015

Good afternoon, everybody. This morning I spoke with, and Vice President Biden spoke with, Mayor Joe Riley and other leaders of Charleston to express our deep sorrow over the senseless murders that took place last night.

Michelle and I know several members of Emanuel AME Church. We knew their pastor, Reverend Clementa Pinckney, who, along with eight others, gathered in prayer and fellowship and was murdered last night. And to say our thoughts and prayers are with them and their families and their community doesn't say enough to convey the heartache and the sadness and the anger that we feel.

Any death of this sort is a tragedy. Any shooting involving multiple victims is a tragedy. There is something particularly heartbreaking about the death happening in a place in which we seek solace and we seek peace, in a place of worship.

And Mother Emanuel is, in fact, more than a church. This is a place of worship that was founded by African Americans seeking liberty. This is a church that was burned to the ground because its worships—worshipers worked to end slavery. When there were laws banning all-Black church gatherings, they conducted services in secret. When there was a nonviolent movement to bring our country closer in line with our highest ideals, some of our brightest leaders spoke and led marches from this church's steps. This is a sacred place in the history of Charleston and in the history of America.

The FBI is now on the scene with local police, and more of the Bureau's best are on the way to join them. The Attorney General has announced plans for the FBI to open a hate crime investigation. We understand that the suspect is in custody. And I'll let the best of law enforcement do its work to make sure that justice is served.

Until the investigation is complete, I'm necessarily constrained in terms of talking about the details of the case. But I don't need to be constrained about the emotions that tragedies like this raise. I've had to make statements like this too many times. Communities like this have had to endure tragedies like this too many times. We don't have all the facts, but we do know that, once again, innocent people were killed in part because someone who wanted to inflict harm had no trouble getting their hands on a gun.

Now is the time for mourning and for healing. But let's be clear: At some point, we as a country will have to reckon with the fact that this type of mass violence does not happen in other advanced countries. It doesn't happen in other places with this kind of frequency. And it is in our power to do something about it. I say that recognizing the politics in this town foreclose a lot of those avenues right now. But it would be wrong for us not to acknowledge it. And at some point, it's going to be important for the American people to come to grips with it and for us to be able to shift how we think about the issue of gun violence collectively.

The fact that this took place in a Black church obviously also raises questions about a dark part of our history. This is not the first time that Black churches have been attacked. And we know that hatred across races and faiths pose a particular threat to our democracy and our ideals.

The good news is, I am confident that the outpouring of unity and strength and fellowship and love across Charleston today from all races, from all faiths, from all places of worship indicates the degree to which those old vestiges of hatred can be overcome. That certainly was Dr. King's hope just over 50 years ago, after four little girls were killed in a bombing in a Black church in Birmingham, Alabama.

He said, "They lived meaningful lives," and "they died nobly." "They say to each of us," Dr. King said, "Black and White alike, that we must substitute courage for caution. They say to us that we must be concerned not merely with [about]* who murdered them, but about the

* White House correction.

system, the way of life, the philosophy which produced the murderers. Their death says to us that we must work passionately and unrelentingly for the realization of the American Dream. . . . And if one will hold on, he will discover that God walks with him, and that God is able to lift you from the fatigue of despair to the buoyancy of hope, and transform dark and desolate valleys into sunlit paths of inner peace."

Reverend Pinckney and his congregation understood that spirit. Their Christian faith compelled them to reach out not just to members of their congregation or to members of their own communities, but to all in need. They opened their doors to strangers who might enter a church in search of healing or redemption.

Mother Emanuel church and its congregation have risen before—from flames, from an earthquake, from other dark times—to give hope to generations of Charlestonians. And with our prayers and our love, and the buoyancy of hope, it will rise again now as a place of peace.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:20 p.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to South Carolina State Sen. Clementa C. Pinckney, who was killed in the June 17 shooting at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, SC; Dylann S. Roof, suspected gunman in the shooting; and Attorney General Loretta E. Lynch.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser in Beverly Hills, California

June 18, 2015

The President. Hello, everybody! Hello! Hello, hello! Thank you. Everybody, please have a seat. Have a seat. I'm going to see a whole bunch of you and take pictures in a second. [*Laughter*]

First of all, I just want to say that Tyler has got a lot of responsibilities, but I think one of the responsibilities we're going to add is to have him travel with me and introduce me everywhere I go. [*Laughter*] You know, he's got that nice voice and that soothing, authoritative manner, and I'm thinking that this will really work. [*Laughter*] So we'll work around your schedule. But thank you so much, Tyler, for your friendship and your grace and everything that you've done for so many people and being such a good role model for so many folks coming up.

Tyler's story is a singular story, but it's also a vindication of what's possible in America. And this idea sometimes that at times is betrayed, that at times we lose sight of, but this basic tenet that if you work hard and are serious about your responsibilities, that no matter where you start, no matter what you look like, where you come from, you can make it in America—I can't imagine anybody embodying that better than Mr. Tyler Perry. So we're really proud of him, really proud of him.

Plus, his baby is so cute! [*Laughter*] I was holding that baby and saying, my, my, my. [*Laughter*] That's a cute baby. Now, everybody's baby is somewhat cute. [*Laughter*] But objectively speaking, this is a really cute baby. So—got a cute mama—[*laughter*]—which make for—I know about that because I employed the same strategy, to improve your gene pool. [*Laughter*] But what a blessing.

And we were talking about how I remember holding Malia and Sasha like that and them drooling on my lapel. Oh, it's okay. Nobody noticed. There wasn't any milk in it, so—[*laughter*]. And then they're 17, and they still love you, but don't find you that interesting. [*Laughter*] But that's part of the process.

Obviously, this is a challenging day for the country and for me and for the people of Charleston. I spoke earlier today and don't

want to repeat myself, but the folks in that historic church were people I know. And Tyler talked about how he grew up in an AME church, so he knows what Wednesday Bible study is all about. He's been one of those 9 or 10 or 15 people studying Scripture and having fellowship and welcoming people and inviting them in to spread the Good News.

And to see such a horrific event unfold like that is particularly shocking. And it's a reminder that we've got a lot of work to do.

Tyler is right: When I came into office, we were going through the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. We were still in the midst of two wars. And I could not be prouder of the work that we have steadily done over the last 6½ years to pull us out of that hole.

By almost every economic measure, Americans are better off today than they were when I came into office. The unemployment rate has gone from 10 percent to 5.5 percent. People who had lost their savings in 401(k)s have seen them not just restored, but exceeding where they were. The auto industry, which was flatlining with the potential loss of a million jobs, now is thriving, even stronger than it was before the crisis. Housing has begun to recover.

We produce more energy than ever before. We doubled the production of clean energy—wind power 3 times as much as when I came into office, solar 10 times as much—and as a consequence, we've actually been able to reduce our carbon emissions that cause climate change more than any other nation on Earth.

High school graduations are up. College attendance is up. Reading scores are up. Sixteen million people have health insurance that didn't have it before. The uninsured rate has never been lower in America.

We've done all this and cut the deficit by two-thirds. And so there's almost no measure by which one could argue that we have not made significant progress over these last 6½ years. But we've got so much work to do. There's so much that's left undone. We still live in a country in which the idea of equal opportunity is not felt, is not experienced, is not lived for too many young people. Too many in our middle class have seen their incomes and wages flatline even as their expenses go up. Too many young people are still priced out of college, and if they do go to college, are burdened with extraordinary debt.

[*At this point, a baby screamed.*]

Yes! [*Laughter*] I think your folks are going to be able to pay for your college, but there are a lot of people who won't—[*applause*]. Worried about it.

Too many of our young people see the path to prison much more clearly than they do the path to a college education. Too many of our kids still go hungry in this country.

I was looking at some statistics, because we're looking at policies around hunger and the SNAP program, and the performance of children in lower-income communities in school dips at the end of the month in a statistically significant way, in part because they start getting hungry as their food stamps for their family start running out which then affects how they perform in school.

There's so much to do to grow this economy in a way that's broad based. We could be investing in roads and bridges and airports and a new electric grid and put people to work right now and lay the foundation for growth for years to come. We should be investing more money in research and development to cure diseases like Alzheimer's and Parkinson's.

We should be reforming our criminal justice system in such a way that we are not incarcerating nonviolent offenders in ways that renders them incapable of getting a job after they leave office—or after—[*laughter*]—little slip of the tongue there. [*Laughter*] Little Freudian slip. [*Laughter*] Tyler is going to give me a job once I leave. [*Laughter*] It is true—I think it was Bill Clinton who said—the White House is the crown jewel of the Federal penitentiary system. [*Laughter*]

And here's the thing. Here's the thing. On all these issues, we actually know what the solutions are. The problem is not the absence of proven strategies to increase opportunity. We know early childhood education works; that if it's well designed and you've got teachers who

have been trained in early childhood development and you take low-income kids and you give them those opportunities, we know that they are going to perform better in school, that they're more likely to read at grade level when they enter into third grade, which means that they're less likely to drop out, which means they're less likely to get into the criminal justice system, which means they're more likely to graduate and attend college, which means they are more likely to get a job, which means that they are more likely to be productive, taxpaying citizens. We know that. We know that a dollar we invest in that, we get $7 back.

We know that infrastructure spurs on economic development and that our future depends on how we invest in research to keep at the cutting edge of technology in this knowledge-based economy. We know it.

We know immigration reform would not only bring millions of people out of the shadows that we could not practically or in good conscience deport and that they would then make contributions, they would pay taxes, it would actually reduce the deficit, increase entrepreneurship. We know that. It's one of our strengths as a country.

We know that our kids have to be able to afford a college education and that those States and cities and communities where they've got a well-educated workforce, that's where companies want to move to.

The problem is not that we don't know what works. The problem is, is that too often the political system doesn't reflect the common sense and decency of the American people.

I got a letter a while back from a gentleman living in Colorado and clearly an intelligent guy, and he had taken a lot of time to write this letter. And he said, you know, I voted for you twice, but I'm feeling disillusioned. And the good news—I get 10 letters a day out of the 40,000, and I read those 10 each night. And I've given strict instructions to the Correspondence Office, I do not just want the nice letters, and they have followed my instructions. [*Laughter*] And I get letters, people say, you are an idiot—[*laughter*]—and here's what you didn't do, and here's the program that is terrible, and all kinds of stuff. But this gentleman, he said, I voted for you twice, but I'm deeply disappointed. And it went on and on, chronicling all the things that hadn't gotten done.

And most of what he said I responded to, I think, pretty effectively—[*laughter*]—because he seemed to have forgotten everything that had happened and how he had benefited. But the core, I think, of his concern, the core of his complaint was that he thought that when I got to Washington I could bring people together and make them work more effectively. And the fact of the matter is, is that Washington is still gridlocked and still seems obsessed with the short term and the next election instead of the next generation.

And on that issue, I had to tell him, you're right. I am frustrated, and you have every right to be frustrated, because Congress doesn't work the way it should. Issues are left untended. Folks are more interested in scoring political points than getting things done, not because any individual Member of Congress is a bad person—there are a lot of good, well-meaning, hard-working people out there—but because the incentives that have been built into the system reward short term, reward a polarized politics, reward being simplistic instead of being true, reward division.

And as mightily as I have struggled against that, I told him, you're right. It still is broken. But I reminded him that when I ran in 2008, I, in fact, did not say I would fix it; I said we could fix it. I didn't say, yes, I can; I said—what?

Audience members. Yes, we can!

The President. Yes, we can. And so I said to him, if in fact you are dissatisfied, then writing a letter to me is nice, but I need you. If you're dissatisfied that every few months we have a mass shooting in this country, killing innocent people, then I need you to mobilize and organize a constituency that says this is not normal and we are going to change it and put pressure to elect people who insist on that change.

If you're concerned about racial polarization in this country, it's nice to have dialogues around race, but me making a good speech—and I've made some good speeches on the

subject—[*laughter*]—that's not going to solve the problem. What are you doing to reach out in your own community to make sure that that child who does not look like your child has the same opportunities that your child does? How are you voting when a referendum comes up about an early childhood education program? A program to encourage college attendance? What kind of mentorship are you involved with?

If you don't think that we've done enough to deal with climate change, what are you willing to give up to make sure that we have a breathable, functioning planet for our children and our grandchildren?

Sometimes, I feel like people forgot the essence of my pledge when I ran for President. What I promised—I said to people, I said, I am not a perfect man, I will not be a perfect President, but I promise you I will wake up every single day and I will go to bed every single night thinking about how to make sure that ordinary Americans have a chance. And I will fight as hard as I can, and I'll be as honest and straightforward as I can about what I believe can open up the doors of opportunity to everybody. That pledge I've kept.

But what I also said was that the most important office in a democracy is the office of citizen. And that's true for the President of the United States, but that will be just as true for me when I leave this office. And it's true for all of you.

And I raise this because you being part of this even is, part of the process of breaking out of what is a comfortable cynicism that we too often fall back on, and we just say, oh, that place, Washington, doesn't work, and everybody is dysfunctional, or that side of the aisle is crazy. And then we just throw up our hands and give up. We can't afford that, because we've got more work to do.

So part of what I hope you leave here with is not just a cool picture with me—[*laughter*]—because I look out in the crowd, a lot of you already have pictures with me. [*Laughter*] But I hope what you leave with is that sense that the unfinished business we've got does not just depend on me, does not just depend on the next President we elect, does not just depend on any particular Member of Congress. It depends on you.

And in these final 18 months, one of my biggest messages is that if we want the change we believe in, then we're going to have to work harder than ever in our own communities and in our own places of worship and in our own workplaces and reflect those values and ideals and then push this society and ultimately push Congress in the direction of change.

The good news is, we can do it. When I stood at the Edmund Pettus Bridge with John Lewis to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the march there, I reminded people of the fact that change is never easy. It takes decades of work sometimes just to make a little bit of progress. Sometimes, it takes a century to make a little bit of progress. But because somebody took on that work, successive generations took on that work, America is better than it was.

And so now we receive the baton and we run our race, and then we've got to hand it off to that beautiful baby of Tyler's and that beautiful baby right behind Tyler right now. And if we keep that faith and fight off cynicism, then 20 years from now, 50 years from now, 100 years from now, people are going to say, okay, they ran the good race, and we're further along, and America is better and more just, and opportunity is more real for more people. And that's why we do what we do. That's the only reason to do it.

Thank you for being part of that process. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:31 p.m. at the residence of Tyler Perry. In his remarks, he referred to Gelila Bekele, girlfriend of Mr. Perry, and their son Aman T. Bekele-Perry. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement on Pope Francis's Encyclical on Climate Change
June 18, 2015

I welcome His Holiness Pope Francis's encyclical and deeply admire the Pope's decision to make the case—clearly, powerfully, and with the full moral authority of his position—for action on global climate change.

As Pope Francis so eloquently stated this morning, we have a profound responsibility to protect our children and our children's children from the damaging impacts of climate change. I believe the United States must be a leader in this effort, which is why I am committed to taking bold actions at home and abroad to cut carbon pollution, to increase clean energy and energy efficiency, to build resilience in vulnerable communities, and to encourage responsible stewardship of our natural resources. We must also protect the world's poor, who have done the least to contribute to this looming crisis and stand to lose the most if we fail to avert it.

I look forward to discussing these issues with Pope Francis when he visits the White House in September. And as we prepare for global climate negotiations in Paris this December, it is my hope that all world leaders—and all God's children—will reflect on Pope Francis's call to come together to care for our common home.

Remarks to the United States Conference of Mayors in San Francisco, California
June 19, 2015

The President. Thank you, mayors! Thank you so much. I love being with mayors. [*Laughter*] It is great to be here, although I did worry a little bit that Dennis Johnson would introduce me again. At the White House, he had the old Bulls theme song, and it set a very high bar, as if I was Michael Jordan coming out. [*Laughter*] And he is a great friend, and I very much appreciate him, as I do so many of the mayors here. I saw a lot of you in Washington in January. I thought, I had such a good time, let's meet this summer as well. And this time, I thought I'd come to you.

I want to thank our host, San Francisco Mayor Ed Lee. He was just in the White House for the San Francisco Giants' championship visit. I know how excited the Bay Area is over the Golden State Warriors' championship.

I want to thank two outstanding public servants, Governor Jerry Brown and Leader Nancy Pelosi, who are here with us today. And I want to thank this year's leaders of the Conference of Mayors: Kevin Johnson, Baltimore Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake, and Oklahoma City Mayor Mick Cornett.

I also want to mention a few outstanding mayors who are getting ready to step down: Michael Nutter of Philadelphia has done outstanding work; Greg Ballard of Indianapolis, an outstanding mayor, doing great work with "My Brother's Keeper"—thank you; Annise Parker of Houston, I love Annise; and my dear, old friend, Michael Coleman of Columbus, Ohio.

And finally, a great mayor, one of my favorite people, and I know one of the people all of you admire so much, a great mayor, Joe Riley of Charleston. Joe is back home doing one of a mayor's sadder, more important duties today.

Obviously, the entire country has been shocked and heartbroken by what happened in Charleston. The nature of this attack—in a place of worship, where congregants invite in a stranger to worship with them, only to be gunned down—adds to the pain. The apparent motivations of the shooter remind us that racism remains a blight that we have to combat together. We have made great progress, but we have to be vigilant because it still lingers. And when it's poisoning the minds of young people, it betrays our ideals and tears our democracy apart.

But as much as we grieve this particular tragedy, I think it's important, as I mentioned at the White House, to step back and recognize, these tragedies have become far too commonplace.

Few people understand the terrible toll of gun violence like mayors do. And whether it's a mass shooting like the one in Charleston or individual attacks of violence that add up over time, it tears at the fabric of a community. It costs you money, and it costs resources. It costs this country dearly.

More than 11,000 Americans were killed by gun violence in 2013 alone—11,000. If Congress had passed some commonsense gun safety reforms after Newtown, after a group of children had been gunned down in their own classroom, reforms that 90 percent of the American people supported, we wouldn't have prevented every act of violence, or even most. We don't know if it would have prevented what happened in Charleston. No reform can guarantee the elimination of violence. But we might still have some more Americans with us. We might have stopped one shooter. Some families might still be whole. You all might have to attend fewer funerals.

And we should be strong enough to acknowledge this. At the very least, we should be able to talk about this issue as citizens, without demonizing all gun owners who are overwhelmingly law abiding, but also without suggesting that any debate about this involves a wild-eyed plot to take everybody's guns away.

I know today's politics makes it less likely that we see any sort of serious gun safety legislation. I remarked that it was very unlikely that this Congress would act. And some reporters, I think, took this as resignation. I want to be clear: I am not resigned. I have faith we will eventually do the right thing. I was simply making the point that we have to move public opinion. We have to feel a sense of urgency.

Ultimately, Congress will follow the people. And we have to stop being confused about this. At some point, as a country, we have to reckon with what happens. It is not good enough simply to show sympathy.

You don't see murder on this kind of scale, with this kind of frequency, in any other advanced nation on Earth. Every country has violent, hateful, or mentally unstable people. What's different is, not every country is awash with easily accessible guns. And so I refuse to act as if this is the new normal or to pretend that it's simply sufficient to grieve and that any mention of us doing something to stop it is somehow politicizing the problem.

We need a change in attitudes among everybody: lawful gun owners, those who are unfamiliar with guns. We have to have a conversation about it and fix this.

And ultimately, Congress acts when the public insists on action. And we've seen how public opinion can change. We've seen it change on gay marriage. We've seen it beginning to change on climate change. We've got to shift how we think about this issue. And we have the capacity to change, but we have to feel a sense of urgency about it. We, as a people, have got to change. That's how we honor those families. That's how we honor the families in Newtown. That's how we honor the families in Aurora.

Now, the first time I spoke at this conference, in 2008, I said that American cities shouldn't be succeeding despite Washington, they should be succeeding with some help from Washington. And as President, I've made it a priority to partner with mayors like you. That's why I've named three former mayors to my Cabinet. That's why I asked a former president of this conference, Jerry Abramson, to be one of my top advisers. That's why my staff and I work with mayors across the country just about every day, on just about every issue under the sun, from school reform to community policing, from business development to veterans homelessness.

Because mayors have to get the job done. If you're a mayor, it's not sufficient to just blather on. [*Laughter*] You actually have to do something. [*Laughter*] It's not enough to figure out how do I position myself on a particular issue to minimize the possibility that I might get in trouble or criticized, because people expect you to trim the trees and pave the roads and

pick up the garbage and educate our kids and police our streets.

Whatever the problem, large or small, you got to do everything you can to solve it. You don't let partisanship stop you. You don't let cynicism stop you. You're always in the hunt for good ideas, no matter where they come from.

And I'm going to embarrass Jerry for a second. He took his wife to Paris a few years after they got married. And she took in all the splendor of the Champs-Élysées. And he took photos of garbage cans. [*Laughter*] That's a mayor for you. [*Laughter*] So she teased him about it. She said, there's the Eiffel Tower. There's the Seine. And he said, "Those are some beautiful garbage cans!" [*Laughter*] And soon enough, downtown Louisville had garbage cans that looked a lot like the Parisian garbage cans. [*Laughter*]

That's a mayor, right there! [*Laughter*] Somebody who's always thinking about how to make his or her city better—even on vacation in Paris—[*laughter*]—and stops at nothing to get it done.

Now, as President, I'm constantly thinking about how we, together, can keep growing the economy and growing new pathways of opportunity for the American people to get ahead. And across the country, the good news is, we're making progress. And you're seeing it in your cities. More than 12 million new private sector jobs in the past 5 years; more than 16 million Americans who have gained health insurance; more jobs creating more clean energy. Here in California, solar is growing crazy. We're producing 10 times as much solar power today as we did when I came into office—10 times; 3 times as much wind power, double the amount of clean energy. More kids graduating from high school and college than ever before.

I'm proud of that record. And by the way, we've done it while reducing the deficit by two-thirds. You don't hear that that much, but let me just point that out. And I'm proud of it particularly when it's so hard to get anything through Congress, even when we're talking about issues that most Americans outside of Washington agree on.

But that's also why we've partnered with many of you over the past couple of years: to make real progress on the economic priorities that matter to middle class Americans. We're working with many of you to help working families make ends meet and feel more secure in a changing economy. So far, 19 cities have enacted paid sick leave—sick days; 5 States enacted paid sick days or paid family leave. Oregon is set to join them soon. Seventeen States have raised their minimum wage; 27 cities and counties have taken action to raise the wage as well.

We're working with many of you to help working families earn higher wages down the road with skills and education they need. Seattle, a city with a Democratic mayor, Ed Murray, just passed universal pre-K. Indianapolis, a city with a Republican mayor, Greg Ballard, is starting citywide preschool scholarships. Thirty-four States have increased funding for preschool as well, which means even more young people getting the early enrichment that can pay off over a lifetime.

Three months ago, I launched an initiative called TechHire to help train workers for the high-skill, high-wage jobs of tomorrow. Twenty-one communities have signed up for TechHire so far, and we're looking to double that number. So if your town has tech jobs that need filling, the people who want to fill them, come join us.

We're working with many of you to generate more high-wage jobs for our workers to fill. Eleven cities have joined a new initiative called Startup in a Day to help entrepreneurs apply for all the licenses and permits they need to start a business in just one day. Cut the redtape.

We're working with cities to create a network of high-tech manufacturing hubs to keep America at the forefront of innovation. The first hub in Youngstown, Ohio, is doing cutting-edge research in 3–D printing and has already attracted tens of millions of dollars in investment to the region.

So we're creating jobs, we're training folks for jobs. We're also working with many of you to make our streets safer and our communities

stronger. More than 230 local and tribal leaders have joined the "My Brother's Keeper" initiative and are taking meaningful steps to change the odds for young people in tough circumstances. Together, you're working to curb juvenile arrests, reduce absenteeism, and you're helping these kids imagine a bigger future for themselves.

Today, at the Lawrence Livermore National Lab just down the road, more than a hundred students from Oakland and San Francisco are participating in the first "MBK Day at the Lab," where they can learn about STEM careers.

And meanwhile, from police holding impromptu town hall meetings in barbershops in Charlotte to Boston Police Academy improving how it trains cops to deal with young people on the job, cities like yours are striving to rebuild trust between law enforcement and communities, making sure police have the resources they need to do their job and making sure that every police officer who has an incredibly tough job is trained in making the kinds of connections with communities that engender trust and ensure that everybody is treated equally under the law, which makes for smart law enforcement and vindicates our values.

So these are just a few of the examples of the work that's being done. And I'd name every single way that we're working together to open new doors of opportunity for the American people, but we'd be here all day. So here is the bottom line. On America's most important economic priorities—from supporting working families to improving education, to creating good new jobs, to getting people to those new jobs, to improving affordable housing, to dealing with homelessness—cities are not standing still. You are moving forward.

So I want to say two things to you. Number one, thank you. Thank you for your leadership and your vision. And I particularly want to thank you because more than just about any other office in the land, those who occupy the office of mayor are approaching it in a practical way. Democrats aren't clinging to dogmas and are partnering with businesses anywhere they can. And Republicans aren't clinging to their dogmas; they're recognizing that government has a role to play in helping make for a vibrant city and expanding opportunity.

And that commonsense, problem-solving, can-do attitude, that's what the American people are looking for. That's what they need. So I want to say thank you to all of you. You're setting a good example.

Now, second, I also want to say, don't stop now, because we've still got a lot more work to do. We've got to keep pushing to grow our economy so that more Americans who work hard feel like their hard work is paying off, which is why I'm working with Congress to pass new 21st-century trade agreements with higher standards and tougher protections than past agreements. And I appreciate the help of many of the mayors here to get that done, because you know it's important to your cities. I believe it's the right thing to do for American workers and families, or I would not be doing it. I want to thank all of you who helped me make that case: that this matters to your cities.

We've got to keep pushing to put people to work rebuilding our infrastructure. There's not a mayor here who can't reel off 10 infrastructure projects right now that you'd love to get funding for and that would put people to work right away and improve your competitiveness and help businesses move their products and help people get to their jobs. We can keep paying the costs of patching over our existing infrastructure: more expensive, less efficient, leading to higher commute times, more waste. That's an option. Or we can create tens of thousands of jobs right now building a 21st-century infrastructure that makes us competitive well into the 21st century. That's what we need to do. We've just got to convince Congress to make it happen. And I need mayors to help, from all across the country. Put some pressure on Congress to get this done.

We've got to keep pushing to prepare for the impacts of climate change, because it's science. It's a fact. It's like gravity. [*Laughter*] I——

Audience member. Yes, it is.

The President. It is!

A lot of cities have gone far ahead on this issue, along with States. You're making a

difference right now. You're not waiting for Congress. Mayor Roy Buol is here from Dubuque, Iowa. They've set a target to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions 50 percent from 2003 levels by the end of the next decade. Just met with Governor Jerry Brown. He's talking about how California, which so often has been a leader on environmental issues, is looking to partner and make a difference internationally.

Today my administration proposed new fuel standards for buses and tractor trailers and other heavy-duty vehicles, another important step towards reducing harmful carbon pollution and protecting our planet.

But a lot of this does come down to Congress. I know many of you are worried about Congress cutting programs that are important to your city's economic growth. But the battle we should be having with Congress isn't just about individual programs. It's about the foolish, self-destructive cuts that in Washington are known as the sequester, because with the sequester, the whole pie is smaller, so protecting one program means cutting another one.

That's why you're facing cuts that don't make any sense to things like TIGER grants, which are—you all know are so important to putting our people to work rebuilding our infrastructure. That's the reason why it's so hard for us to get the funding we need to get homeless assistance grants, which help some of our most vulnerable neighbors and get them off the streets. That's why it's been so difficult to fund the preschool development grants, which help educate our children, which we know if we make that investment will pay off for your cities, your States, and for our country.

I've been clear: I will not sign bills at sequestration levels. I will not sign bills that seek to increase defense spending before addressing any of our needs here at home.

And I need your help. I need your help, Mayors, to talk to your Members of Congress to get rid of the sequester once and for all, because it is harming our cities and harming our country. There is no business—no successful business—that if it needed to reduce spending, would simply lop off 10 percent of everything or 15 percent of everything. That's not how any of us would run our household budget. You'd cut out things you don't need, but you'd still keep the college fund going. You'd still pay your health insurance bill and your mortgage note. There are things we have to do as a country to stay ahead.

Once again, mayors understand that if there's a conflict between ideology and reality, you should opt for reality. Don't—[*laughter*]—reality is a stubborn thing: facts, evidence, reason. [*Laughter*]

So thanks for your partnership. I want you to know that as long as I'm in the White House, I've got your back. I love the country, I love the suburbs, but I'm a city guy. [*Laughter*] And I know that when cities thrive, suburbs thrive. And when cities thrive, farmlands thrive. And when cities thrive, States thrive. And when cities thrive, America thrives.

You guys are making it happen. I enjoy working with each and every one of you. And I know that each of you takes pride in what makes your hometown unique. You may be proud of your pizza or your hoagies or your barbecue—even though everybody knows Chicago has the best pizza. [*Laughter*] You may be proud of your city's victory parades, even though we've got a Blackhawk parade that's pretty good. [*Laughter*] I'm sure you're all very proud of your parks. We've got nice parks. Or the number of sunny days you've got, which we enjoy half the year. [*Laughter*] Chances are you've got a few superlatives ready when—in case somebody asks, "What makes your city so special?" That's what mayors do. You're boosters.

Yet as unique as your cities are, as proud of—as you should be of your cities, we always remind ourselves we're also Americans. And we all want an America to be a place where our ZIP Code does not determine our destiny, where every kid, in whatever city, whatever hamlet, whatever town, has an equal shot at life when they grow up. No matter who you are or where you come from, you can make it if you try.

That's what's America is about. That's what you're fighting for every day. And I'm going to

fight right there alongside with you. Thank you, everybody. God bless you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:30 p.m. at the Hilton San Francisco Union Square hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Kevin M. Johnson of Sacramento, CA; Michael Jordan, former guard, National Basketball Association's Chicago Bulls; Dylann S. Roof, suspected gunman in the June 17 shooting in Charleston, SC; Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Julián Castro, in his former capacity as mayor of San Antonio, TX; Secretary of Transportation Anthony R. Foxx, in his former capacity as mayor of Charlotte, NC; Secretary of Agriculture Thomas J. Vilsack, in his former capacity as mayor of Mount Pleasant, IA; and Jerry E. Abramson, Director, Office of Intergovernmental Affairs.

Remarks at a Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee Fundraiser in San Francisco
June 19, 2015

Thank you. Well, first of all, I think the Bay Area generally has been a little greedy when it comes to championships. Fortunately, the Blackhawks—[*laughter*]—just had their parade, so we kind of wedged our way in between the Giants and the Warriors.

But let me just say that it is actually really impressive. The Warriors played basketball the way basketball should be played and are a class organization. I had a chance to talk to Steve Kerr, who I will eternally be fond of because he was a Bull who, receiving a pass from Michael Jordan, hit a series-winning shot. That's right. And I talked to Steph as well. Steph had come by the White House because, some of you may be aware, every time he makes a 3-point shot, he makes a contribution to purchase malaria nets. And so he was doing something with the State Department, and he stopped by, and could not be a finer young man and a better representative of the sport as well as the Bay Area.

And so you guys deserve to win. [*Laughter*] This year. [*Laughter*] And I will welcome them to the White House, and I will be pleasant, and I will say nice things about them. [*Laughter*] But understand, the Bulls are coming. The Bulls are coming. [*Laughter*] White Sox. [*Laughter*] Although, Cubs, that's fine too. [*Laughter*]

I want to obviously start by thanking Tom and Kat. They are incredible friends. They are incredible community leaders, national and international leaders on issues that matter not just to America, but matter to the world. And they appear to have done an outstanding job with their children. I just had a chance to meet them, and they are all smart and good looking and well mannered. [*Laughter*] And I think that—well, Tom is denying they're well mannered. Look, the important thing is how they act outside of the house. [*Laughter*] If they put on a good show for everybody else, that's fine. And so—yes, right, happy Father's Day because you've done a good job, although I know it was mostly Kat. [*Laughter*] But I can't thank them enough for everything they've done not just to support me, but to support the issues that matter to everybody in this room.

I want to thank Nancy Pelosi. When Tom gave that list of things that we've accomplished, the fact of the matter is that none of those things would have been accomplished had it not been for an extraordinary partner in Congress, and Nancy Pelosi has been that partner, and I could not be prouder to work with her.

Nancy could not be such a good partner if it weren't for the incredible Members of Congress who constitute the Democratic Caucus. And I brought my list here because nothing is worse than you missing somebody in the acknowledgments; you will never live it down. [*Laughter*] So I'm just going to make sure that I see everybody here. First of all, we've got Barbara Lee. We love Barbara. I've got Anna Eshoo right there. Love Anna. We've got John

Garamendi. Where's John? He's a big guy so he's hard to miss. There you go. The outstanding Ami Bera is here, down from Sacramento. And our a DCCC chair, Ben Ray Luján. And I want to thank Kev Choice, who apparently is pretty talented. There you go, thank you, Kev.

So in addition to basketball, I've been thinking about a few other things. [*Laughter*] Obviously, over the last couple of days, the thing I've been thinking about most is what happened in Charleston. I won't repeat the comments that I've been making about this issue because I suspect I'm preaching to the choir here, but in addition to heartbreak and wanting to extend love and prayer and support to the families who have been affected; in addition to marveling at the statements that those family members of those victims made today to this suspect; and for them to find the strength to be able to say, "We forgive you," an expression of faith that is unimaginable, but that reflects the goodness of the American people; in addition to all those things, I think it's important for us to acknowledge that this stuff happens way too often.

These mass shootings like this do not happen in other advanced countries around the world. They are unique, in their frequency, to America. And it's not because there aren't violent people or racist people or crazy people in other countries; it's that a 21-year-old kid can't just walk in and buy a firearm and, oftentimes, through gun shows, avoid background checks, and then act on this hatred. And we've got to change that. And it's not enough for us to express sympathy. We have to take action. And it is not going to happen in this Congress, but we have to stay on it so that it does.

And that leads me, I guess, to a broader reflection on where we are as a country. I could not be prouder of the progress that, with the help of Democrats in Congress, and most importantly, due to the resilience of the American people, the progress we've been able to accomplish over these last 6½ years. And you heard some of the statistics. Unemployment down from 10 percent to 5.5 percent. Stock market and 401(k)s recovered. The housing market back almost to normal. People regaining a sense of stability in their own finances. The deficit down by two-thirds. Close to 13 million jobs created over a 5-year stretch.

Millions of people getting coverage for the first time. But perhaps less noticed, but just as important, people who did—do have health insurance having protections they didn't have before. There was a gentleman here that I won't point out, but as we were taking a picture said: "My daughter has a congenital heart disease, 8 years old. And her life is going to be better because she can't be discriminated against because of a preexisting condition." That's also part of what we accomplished.

We have been able to increase high school graduation rates to record levels. College attendance rates to record levels. We're starting to see improvements in early—elementary school reading scores. We have doubled the production of clean energy; increased solar energy by about 10 times, by a factor of 10. We have increased wind power, tripled it, since I came into office. Doubled fuel efficiency standards on cars. I could go on.

The point is, there's almost no economic measure by which we are not better off than when I came into office. We've ended two wars. We have, by and large, been able to protect the American homeland, and we have been able to conduct operations against terrorist organizations while staying true to the law and our Constitution and our values. We've expanded protections and not just tolerance, but embraced our LGBT community in ways that might have seemed unimaginable 10 years ago. I'm really proud of this record.

And the reason I've been able to do it is, I've had partners in Congress. As difficult and frustrating as the legislative process can sometimes be, I've had people who have been willing to stand up and work with me and sometimes compromise, sometimes take half a loaf, sometimes suffer attacks from our own base as much as from the other side. We've done the right thing, and it's paid off.

But the amount of work left undone is remarkable. The challenges, but also the opportunities to continue to grow this economy so that everybody gets a shot, our ability to make

sure that the next generation inherits not just a better America, but a better planet from this generation. The opportunities are there, and the challenges are significant. And there are two things in particular that these days I'm spending a lot of time thinking about.

The first is the changing nature of the economy. We were talking earlier with a smaller group, and I think Tom asked me, why is it that the country may not fully appreciate how remarkable our recovery has been compared to the historical standard after a major financial crisis? And I said, well, part of it is we've had a 20-, 30-year trend in which the middle class has seen its incomes and wages flatlined. And the ladders of upward mobility have been reduced. And so even though we have overperformed, relative to other countries and the historical standard, what we haven't yet done is reverse that trend of growing inequality, a stressed and static middle class. And until we tackle that, people aren't going to feel better. They're not going to feel a sense of optimism.

And the good news is, there are things we know can make a difference there. If we invest in early childhood education, and if we do infrastructure, and if we invest in basic science and research, and if we make sure that our trading practices with other countries are fair and are of high standards, and if we don't shy away from this new economy, but we lean into it and embrace it—because this new economy is all about knowledge and innovation, and that's who we are as Americans—if we take some basic steps, then we can give people that sense of upward mobility and optimism and opportunity. It's there. This is not a technical problem, this is a problem of political will. So that's something that I spend a lot of time thinking about.

And the second thing I spend time thinking about is climate change, because if we don't get this right, then no matter how good we do on the other stuff, we're still going to have some big problems. John Holdren, physicist and professor at Harvard, is the head of my Office of Science and Technology—OSTP. And John, every couple of days, sometimes once a week, will send out a missive from the world of science. And sometimes, he'll circulate among our staff the latest picture from the Hubble of some cluster in a galaxy, and it will evoke wonder and remind us of what Americans can do when they put their minds to it.

But a while back, I guess a couple weeks ago, he put out the new report, new information about what the climate science is telling us. And I have to say, it wasn't something I should have read right before I went to bed. [*Laughter*] Because the basic estimates were that by 2050, well within our children's lifetimes, on our current pace, the oceans go up maybe 2, maybe 3, maybe 4 feet. By 2300, which is not in our children's lifetimes—although the science is moving pretty quick—but certainly, within the lifetimes of grandchildren or great-grandchildren, it could be 10 feet, 16 feet. The magnitude of the changes that could be taking place if we don't get a handle on this are irreversible. And just like is true in our economy, where if we take some basic steps now—some of them tough, some of them common sense—we can reverse some of these trends and really make a difference, the same is true on climate.

This is not a situation as if we have to turn off the lights and go back and live in caves. This is a matter of us taking some basic steps to increase efficiency and expand clean energy production and change our grid and develop new technologies. And it's well within reach, and we still have time to do it. Part of what's sometimes, I think, a problem for those who care about this is we paint such a bleak picture that people start throwing up their hands and thinking, well, I guess there's nothing we can do about it. And it ends up being self-defeating. But the truth is, here there is something we can do.

If we can double the fuel efficiency standards of our auto fleet, then lo and behold, we can do it with our truck fleet. If Japan is 20-percent more efficient in terms of energy use in its buildings and its schools and its hospitals, well, that's existing technology; we can adapt it here. If we know that how we produce power is unsustainable, we have the tools or we'll

figure out the tools to generate power in cleaner ways if the right incentives are in place.

So the good news is, is that we've actually, as Tom said, made extraordinary progress in a pretty short time with not a lot of political support. Imagine what we could do if Congress actually started moving with us, as opposed to against us. And we're not going to move the rest of the world unless we move too. The reason we were able to get movement from China on this issue is because we showed our own commitment. We showed our own cards. And the way we're going to get India invested in this is because they see us and China doing something. And the way we then get Brazil and other countries is because it starts being something that is gaining international momentum. But it always starts with us. It's frustrating sometimes that it has to start with us; it would be nice if things happened without us, but they don't.

So the bottom line is that when I talk to interns—we usually have about a 6-month program, and I take a picture at the—and I do some Q&A, and they ask me, you know, what was your favorite book, and what advice do you have? [*Laughter*] And they're spectacular, amazing young people—they really make you optimistic—from all across the country. But the most important piece of advice, I think, I give them is, don't get cynical. Don't get cynical. I tell them that if there was any time in human history where you'd want to be born and you didn't know who you were going to end up being, it would be now. Because this planet has never—the people of this planet have never been healthier, have never lived longer, have never been better educated. The world has, surprisingly enough, never been less violent, has never been more tolerant than today. What you can't do is give into this notion that nothing can change because things change all the time, and they change remarkably.

When you look at something like Charleston, it's heartbreaking. But I have told people, guard against this notion that somehow things aren't any different than they were 50 years ago, because you weren't living in Charleston, South Carolina, 50 years ago if you say that. Dr. King said, "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice." It's true. The trend lines are good. But it bends only because people put their shoulder to the wheel and folks like Tom and Kat and Nancy Pelosi and Barbara Lee and all the Members of Congress who are here who know what we need to do, we put our shoulder against the wheel, and we make some progress.

And I guarantee you, we never make as much progress as we should. We're always falling a little bit short. We're always a little bit battered and bruised. We're always a little bit frustrated. But we make it better. And I tell these interns, you know what, better is good. Better is good. And one of the challenges of our politics today is, is that we forget that. People think if we don't get 100 percent of what we want right now, to date, without a single compromise, without having to tack north or south or east, unless we are immediately gratified, then somehow, the whole system is broken. Well, that's not true. It's just hard, because we live in a democracy, and we get in arguments.

But we can make it better. And by making it better, we add our little bit to this journey towards progress and more justice and more equality and more empathy and more compassion. And then, we leave some work for our amazing kids to do, because we wouldn't want to solve all their problems for them. [*Laughter*] But the reason we've got to start now is because on at least a couple things—on climate change and I believe on the growing trends towards inequality—if we don't get those right now, then it may be very difficult for them to fix in the future. Some of these patterns get irreversible if we don't get them right now.

So let me just close by saying this: If we're going to make things better, then you've got to have a Congress that cares and is willing to do tough stuff. As I think some of you may have noticed, it's not like I agree with my Democratic Caucus on everything. [*Laughter*] But on 98 percent of things, they're moving in the right direction, and I know where their heart is, and I know what their values are, and I know what they care about.

We're not going to be able to do this because you get one President elected. That President has to have some help, and you've got to make sure that you are as invested in our congressional races, our Senate races, as you are in the upcoming Presidential race.

Ultimately, the most important office in a democracy is the office of citizen. And Nancy can't do it without you. I can't do it without you. My successor will not be able to do it without you. So I need you to feel the same sense of urgency. And if you do, put your shoulder to the wheel alongside all of us, then there's cause for optimism, and things are going to get better, and all this work will have been worthwhile.

Thanks very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:40 p.m. at the residence of Thomas F. Steyer and Kathryn A. Taylor. In his remarks, he referred to Stephen D. Kerr, coach, and W. Stephen Curry II, guard, National Basketball Association's Golden State Warriors; Michael Jordan, former guard, NBA's Chicago Bulls; Sam, Gus, Evi, and Henry Steyer, children of Mr. Steyer and Ms. Taylor; musician Kev Choice; and Dylann S. Roof, suspected gunman in the June 17 shooting in Charleston, SC. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement on World Refugee Day
June 19, 2015

Tomorrow, on World Refugee Day, we will pause to reflect on the millions around the world who have been displaced from their homes: the hardships they face, the courage and resilience they demonstrate, and the dedication of those who come to their aid.

This year's commemoration comes as worldwide displacement reaches record levels, with nearly 60 million people uprooted by wars, violence, and persecution. From Syria to Iraq, from Burma to Burundi, from South Sudan to eastern Ukraine, the number of displaced and vulnerable has escalated. The struggles of some are captured in searing images—of people waiting at border crossings, housed in endless lines of tents, and crammed into rickety boats at sea—while those of others, crowded into the shadows of large cities, may go unobserved.

World Refugee Day is a solemn occasion for the United States to join our partners in the international community in recognizing the dignity, value, and potential of every one of these lives. It is a time to recall this Nation's proud tradition of providing support to those who are most vulnerable and a moment to challenge ourselves to continue being as generous and resourceful as we can in meeting their needs.

As the largest global donor of humanitarian aid, the United States supports programs that provide food, water, shelter, and medical care to refugees and other displaced persons. We thank the aid workers who deliver this assistance, sometimes at great personal risk, and we offer our gratitude to the many families who open their homes to those in need. All the while, we express our appreciation for the millions of men and women who, having endured the struggles of displacement, have contributed so much to the life of this Nation.

Statement on the Observance of Juneteenth
June 19, 2015

On this day 150 years ago, more than 2 years after President Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, the slaves of Galveston, Texas, finally received word that the Civil War was over. They were free. A century and a half later, Americans still recognize this occasion, Juneteenth, as a symbolic milestone on our journey toward a more perfect Union. At

churches and in parks, lined up for parades and gathered around the barbecue pit, communities come together and celebrate the enduring promise of our country: that all of us are created equal.

Yet this year, our celebrations are tinged with sorrow. Our prayers are with the nine members of the Mother Emanuel community—nine members of our American family—whose God-given rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness were so cruelly snatched away. Our hearts go out to their families, their friends, and the entire city of Charleston.

We don't have to look far to see that racism and bigotry, hate and intolerance, are still all too alive in our world. Just as the slaves of Galveston knew that emancipation is only the first step toward true freedom, just as those who crossed the Edmund Pettus Bridge 50 years ago knew their march was far from finished, our work remains undone. For as long as people still hate each other for nothing more than the color of their skin—and so long as it remains far too easy for dangerous people to get their hands on a gun—we cannot honestly say that our country is living up to its highest ideals. But Juneteenth has never been a celebration of victory, or an acceptance of the way things are. Instead, it's a celebration of progress. It's an affirmation that despite the most painful parts of our history, things do get better. America can change.

So no matter our color or our creed, no matter where we come from or who we love, today is a day to find joy in the face of sorrow, to count our blessings, and hold the ones we love a little closer. And tomorrow is a day to keep marching.

The President's Weekly Address
June 20, 2015

Hi, everybody. As President, I spend most of my time focused on what we can do to grow the economy and grow new pathways of opportunity for Americans like you to get ahead.

And we've made progress: more than 12 million new private sector jobs in the past 5 years, more than 16 million Americans who have gained health insurance, more jobs creating more clean energy, more kids graduating from high school and college than ever before.

But in a relentlessly changing economy, we've still got more work to do. And one of the things we should be doing, for example, is rewriting the rules of global trade to benefit American workers and American businesses. I think we should write those rules before China does. That's why I've been working with Congress to pass new, 21st-century trade agreements with standards that are higher and protections that are tougher than any past trade agreement.

I believe it's the right thing to do for American workers and families, or I wouldn't be doing it. I believe it's what will give us the competitive edge in a new economy, or I would not be doing it. Now, several Members of Congress disagree. That's why it's still tied up there, along with a lot of other good ideas that would create jobs. And eventually, I'm optimistic we'll get this done.

But America doesn't stand still. And that's why, on issue after issue where Congress has failed to act, my administration has partnered with mayors and Governors across the country to advance economic priorities that most working families in America are in favor of doing right now.

And we've had success. Over the past couple years, 17 States and 6 major cities have raised the minimum wage for their workers, 19 cities have enacted paid sick days, and 5 States have enacted paid sick days or paid family leave. Thirty-four States increased funding for quality pre-K, and 19 cities and States have signed up for our new TechHire initiative to train workers for the high-wage, high-skill jobs of tomorrow, the kind of jobs that new trade deals would help create.

Some of these victories have been small. Some have been quiet. But they've added up to a big difference for working families across America. And that's what matters to me the

most, because it matters to you. On Friday, I talked about these initiatives and more in a speech to the U.S. Conference of Mayors. Check it out at whitehouse.gov. Some of it might matter to your city.

Thanks, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 10:55 a.m. on June 18 in the Map Room at the White House for broadcast on June 20. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 19, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on June 20.

Statement on the Rhode Island Legislature's Passage of Legislation To Raise the Minimum Wage
June 22, 2015

I commend the Rhode Island Legislature and Governor Raimondo for once again taking action to raise their State's minimum wage. Since I first called on Congress to increase the Federal minimum wage in 2013, 17 States have acted on their own, which will grow the paychecks of millions of American workers. Many private companies have acted as well, recognizing that paying workers fairly is both good for business and the right thing to do. This year, more than half of our States guarantee their workers a wage higher than the Federal minimum. But despite this progress, we still have work to do. I continue to encourage States, cities, counties, and companies to lift their workers' wages, and I urge Congress to finally do the right thing and give America a raise.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Western Balkans
June 22, 2015

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency with respect to the Western Balkans that was declared in Executive Order 13219 of June 26, 2001, is to continue in effect beyond June 26, 2015.

The threat constituted by the actions of persons engaged in, or assisting, sponsoring, or supporting (i) extremist violence in the Republic of Macedonia and elsewhere in the Western Balkans region, or (ii) acts obstructing implementation of the Dayton Accords in Bosnia or United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 of June 10, 1999, related to Kosovo, has not been resolved. In addition, Executive Order 13219 was amended by Executive Order 13304 of May 28, 2003, to take additional steps with respect to acts obstructing implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement of 2001 relating to Macedonia.

Because the acts of extremist violence and obstructionist activity outlined in these Executive Orders are hostile to U.S. interests and continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared with respect to the Western Balkans.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to John A. Boehner, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate. The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to North Korea
June 22, 2015

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency with respect to North Korea that was declared in Executive Order 13466 of June 26, 2008, expanded in scope in Executive Order 13551 of August 30, 2010, addressed further in Executive Order 13570 of April 18, 2011, and further expanded in scope in Executive Order 13687 of January 2, 2015, is to continue in effect beyond June 26, 2015.

The existence and risk of proliferation of weapons-usable fissile material on the Korean Peninsula; the actions and policies of the Government of North Korea that destabilize the Korean Peninsula and imperil U.S. Armed Forces, allies, and trading partners in the region; and other provocative, destabilizing, and repressive actions and policies of the Government of North Korea, continue to constitute an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States. For this reason, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency with respect to North Korea.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to John A. Boehner, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate. The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks at the Iftar Dinner
June 22, 2015

You don't have to all be this serious. [*Laughter*] Welcome to the White House. Now, I know that these are the longest days of the year, which is why I'm so glad that they put the first course down right away. [*Laughter*] I know you're hungry, and I promise to be brief.

I want to thank the members of our diplomatic corps who are here today, as well as our Members of Congress and all those serving across Government who are joining us. And I especially want to recognize all the inspiring young people who are here today, many of whom I've put at my table. [*Laughter*] To all of you and to Muslim Americans across the country, *Ramadan Kareem.*

Our annual White House iftar recognizes the sacredness of Ramadan to more than 1.5 billion Muslims around the world. It's a time when Muslims recommit themselves to their faith, following days of discipline with nights of gratitude for the gifts that God bestows. It's a time of spiritual renewal and a reminder of one's duty to our fellow man: to serve one another and lift up the less fortunate. The Koran teaches that God's children should tread gently upon the Earth and, when confronted by ignorance, reply, "Peace." In honoring these familiar values together—of peace and charity and forgiveness—we affirm that, whatever our faith, we're all one family.

Our iftar is also a reminder of the freedoms that bind us together as Americans, including the freedom of religion: that inviolable right to practice our faiths freely. That's what Samantha Elauf represents. She was determined to defend the right to wear a hijab, to have the

same opportunities as everybody else. She went all the way to the Supreme Court, which I didn't do at her age. [*Laughter*] And she won. So, Samantha, we're very proud of you.

When our values are threatened, we come together as one Nation. When three young Muslim Americans were brutally murdered in Chapel Hill earlier this year, Americans of all faiths rallied around that community. And obviously, tonight our prayers remain with Charleston and Mother Emanuel church. As Americans, we insist that nobody should be targeted because of who they are or what they look like, who they love, how they worship. We stand united against these hateful acts.

These are the freedoms and the ideals and the values that we uphold. And it's more important than ever, because around the world and here at home, there are those who seek to divide us by religion or race or sect. Here in America, many people personally don't know someone who is Muslim. They mostly hear about Muslims in the news, and that can obviously lead to a very distorted impression.

We saw this play out recently at a mosque in Arizona. A group of protesters gathered outside with offensive signs against Islam and Muslims. And then, the mosque's leaders invited them inside to share in the evening prayer. One demonstrator, who accepted the invitation later, described how the experience changed him, how he finally saw the Muslim American community for what it is: peaceful and welcoming. That's what can happen when we stop yelling and start listening. That's why it's so important always to lift up the stories and voices of proud Americans who are contributing to our country every day. And we have a lot of inspiring Americans here today.

They're Muslim Americans like Ziad Ahmed. As a Bangladeshi American growing up in New Jersey, he saw early on that there was not enough understanding in the world. So 2 years ago, he founded Redefy, a website to push back against harmful stereotypes by encouraging teens like him—he's only 16, I think our youngest guest tonight—to share their stories. Because, in Ziad's words, "ignorance can be defeated through education." He wants to do his part to make sure that "Muslims can be equal members of society and still hold onto their faith and identity." So we're very proud of you, Ziad.

They're Muslim Americans like Munira Khalif. And Munira is the daughter of Somali immigrants; she started an organization to support girls' education in East Africa. She just graduated from high school in Minnesota. She's already lobbied Congress to pass the Girls Count Act so that girls in the developing world are documented at birth, a bill I was proud to sign into law last week. She's even spoken at the United Nations. I was also not doing this at her age. [*Laughter*] This fall, Munira is heading to Harvard to continue her education in public service, which was a tough choice, because of course she was accepted to all the Ivy League schools she applied to. [*Laughter*] But we are very, very proud of you, and I know your community is as well.

They're Muslim Americans like Batoul Abuharb, who was born in a refugee camp in Gaza, and when she was an infant her family moved to Houston. After graduating from Rice University, she spent a summer in Gaza working with the U.N. health clinic. After seeing people line up whenever new stocks of vaccines arrived, she started Dunia Health to improve the distribution of vaccines and tell families when to come in, all over text message. They've started with Palestinian refugees in Jordan, but the program has been so successful that the U.N. is looking to expand Dunia's work to more countries across the Middle East. Batoul, we're very proud of you. Congratulations.

So, Ziad, Munira, Batoul—they all talk about how much they value the opportunities they've had to succeed here in the United States. And they also remind us that our obligations to care for one another extend beyond our immediate communities, beyond our borders. So tonight we keep in our prayers those who are suffering around the world, including those marking Ramadan in areas of conflict and deprivation and hunger: the people of Iraq and Syria as they push back on thebarbarity of ISIL; the people of Yemen and Libya, who are seeking an end to ongoing violence and

instability; those fleeing war and hardship in boats across the Mediterranean; the people of Gaza, still recovering from last year's conflict; the Rohingya in Myanmar, including migrants at sea, whose human rights must be upheld.

We're proud, by the way, to have Wai Wai Nu with us tonight, a former political prisoner who's working on human rights issues for the Rohingya and equal rights for women. So we're glad to have you here with us tonight.

So these challenges around the world and here at home demand the very qualities you summon every day during Ramadan: sacrifice, discipline, patience. A resilience that says we don't simply endure, but we overcome. That together, we can overcome ignorance and prejudice. Together, we will overcome conflict and injustice, not just with words, but with deeds. With what a hero of mine, the civil rights icon John Lewis, calls using our feet: getting out in the real world to organize and to create the change that we seek. That's what so many of you do every single day. And that's what we have to continue to do together, here in America and around the world. As the Koran teaches, let us answer with "Peace."

May God bless you all. Have a wonderful Ramadan. And get back to dinner. [*Laughter*] All right? Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Samantha Elauf, plaintiff in the U.S. Supreme Court case *Equal Employment Opportunity Commission* v. *Abercrombie & Fitch Stores, Inc.*; Yusor Mohammad Abu-Salha, Razan Mohammad Abu-Salha, and Deah Shaddy Barakat, who were killed in Chapel Hill, NC, on February 10. He also referred to S. 802, which was approved June 12 and assigned Public Law No. 114–24; and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

Remarks on the United States Government's Hostage Recovery Policy
June 24, 2015

Good afternoon. Since 9/11, more than 80 Americans have been taken hostage by murderous groups engaged in terrorism or privacy. For these innocent men and women—tourists, journalists, humanitarians—it's a horror and cruelty beyond description. For their families and for their friends, it's an unrelenting nightmare that the rest of us cannot even begin to imagine.

As a Government, we should always do everything in our power to bring these Americans home safe and to support their families. Dedicated public servants across our Government work tirelessly to do so. Our military personnel risk their lives in dangerous missions, such as the operation I authorized last year that attempted to rescue Americans held in Syria and Yemen. And there have been successes, such as the rescue of Captain Richard Phillips, held by Somali pirates, and Jessica Buchanan, rescued from Somalia.

Of these more than 80 Americans taken hostage since 9/11, more than half have ultimately come home, some after many years. Tragically, too many others have not. And at this very moment, Americans continue to be held by terrorist groups or detained unjustly by foreign governments. For them, the nightmare goes on, and so does our work, day and night, to reunite them with their loved ones.

As I've said before, the terrorist threat is evolving. The world has been appalled by ISIL's barbaric murder of innocent hostages, including Americans. Moreover, the families of hostages have told us—and they've told me directly—about their frequent frustrations in dealing with their own Government: how different departments and agencies aren't always coordinated, how there's been confusion and conflicting information about what the Government is prepared to do to help, how they've often felt lost in the bureaucracy, and how, in some cases, families feel that they've been threatened for exploring certain options to bring their loved ones home.

That's totally unacceptable. Now, as I've gotten to know some of these families and heard some of these stories, it has been my solemn commitment to make sure that they feel fully supported in their efforts to get their families home and that there is a syncing up of what I know to be sincere, relentless efforts within Government and the families who obviously have one priority and one priority only, and that's getting their loved ones back.

These families have already suffered enough, and they should never feel ignored or victimized by their own Government. Diane Foley, whose son Jim was killed by ISIL last year, said, "As Americans, we can do better." I totally agree. We must do better. And that's why I ordered a comprehensive review of our hostage policy.

I want to thank everybody who contributed to this review, inside and outside of Government, some of whom are here today. I especially want to thank the former hostages and families who contributed. I've come to know some of these families, often under the most heartbreaking of circumstances. When her son Peter, also known as Abdul-Rahman, was being held in Syria, his mother Paula Kassig wrote me a letter. And in it, she described how on clear nights she and her husband would look up at the stars and the Moon and wonder if, perhaps, their son might be able to see them too, a reminder of the bond they might still share.

I've called these families to offer our condolences after they've received gut-wrenching news no parents ever want to hear. I've visited with them. I've hugged them. I've grieved with them. I just spent time with some of the families, as well as some former hostages here at the White House. And needless to say, it was a very emotional meeting. Some are still grieving.

I thanked them for sharing their experiences and their ideas with our review team. In fact, many of the changes we're announcing today are a direct result of their recommendations. I acknowledged to them in private what I want to say publicly: that it is true that there have been times where our Government, regardless of good intentions, has let them down. I promised them that we can do better. Here's how.

Today I'm formally issuing a new Presidential policy directive to improve how we work to bring home American hostages and how we support their families. I've signed a new Executive order to ensure our Government is organized to do so. And we're releasing the final report of our review, which describes the two dozen specific steps that we're taking. Broadly speaking, they fall into three areas.

First, I'm updating our hostage policy. I'm making it clear that our top priority is the safe and rapid recovery of American hostages. And to do so, we will use all elements of our national power. I am reaffirming that the United States Government will not make concessions, such as paying ransom, to terrorist groups holding American hostages. And I know this can be a subject of significant public debate. It's a difficult and emotional issue, especially for the families. As I said to the families who are gathered here today, and as I've said to families in the past, I look at this not just as a President, but also as a husband and a father. And if my family were at risk, obviously, I would move heaven and earth to get those loved ones back.

As President, I also have to consider our larger national security. I firmly believe that the United States Government paying ransom to terrorists risks endangering more Americans and funding the very terrorism that we're trying to stop. And so I firmly believe that our policy ultimately puts fewer Americans at risk.

At the same time, we are clarifying that our policy does not prevent communication with hostage takers: by our Government, the families of hostages, or third parties who help these families. And when appropriate, our Government may assist these families and private efforts in those communications, in part, to ensure the safety of family members and to make sure that they're not defrauded. So my message to these families was simple: We're not going to abandon you. We will stand by you.

Second, we're making changes to ensure that our Government is better organized around this mission. Every department that is

involved in our national security apparatus cares deeply about these hostages, prioritizes them, and works really hard. But they're not always as well coordinated as they need to be. Under the National Security Council here at the White House, we're setting up a new Hostage Response Group, comprised of senior officials from across our Government who will be responsible for ensuring that our hostage policies are consistent and coordinated and implemented rapidly and effectively. And they will be accountable at the highest levels; they'll be accountable to me.

Soon, I'll be designating as well a senior diplomat as my Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs, who will be focused solely on leading our diplomatic efforts with other countries to bring our people home.

At the operational level, we're creating for the first time one central hub where experts from across Government will work together, side-by-side, as one coordinated team to find American hostages and bring them home safely. In fact, this fusion cell, located at the FBI, is already up and running. And we're designating a new official in the intelligence community to be responsible for coordinating the collection, analysis, and rapid dissemination of intelligence related to American hostages so we can act on that intelligence quickly.

Third, and running through all these efforts, we are fundamentally changing how our Government works with families of hostages. Many of the families told us that they at times felt like an afterthought or a distraction, that too often the law enforcement or military and intelligence officials they were interacting with were begrudging in giving them information. And that ends today. I'm making it clear that these families are to be treated like what they are: our trusted partners and active partners in the recovery of their loved ones. We are all on the same team, and nobody cares more about bringing home these Americans than their own families, and we have to treat them as partners.

So, specifically, our new fusion cell will include a person dedicated to coordinating the support families get from the Government. This coordinator will ensure that we communicate with families better, with one clear voice, and that families get information that is timely and accurate. Working with the intelligence community, we will be sharing more intelligence with families.

And this coordinator will be the families' voice within Government, making sure that when decisions are made about their loved ones, their concerns are front and center. Everyone who deals with these families on a regular basis will be given additional training to ensure families are treated with the dignity and compassion that they deserve. In particular, I want to point out that no family of an American hostage has ever been prosecuted for paying a ransom for the return of their loved ones. And the last thing that we should ever do is to add to a family's pain with threats like that.

So the bottom line is this: When it comes to how our Government works to recover Americans held hostage and how we work with their families, we are changing how we do business. After everything they've endured, these families are right to be skeptical, and that's why it's so important, as I told them today, that we will be setting up mechanisms to ensure accountability and implementation. I've directed my national security team to report back to me, including getting feedback from the families to make sure that these reforms are being put in place and that they are working.

In the course of our review, several families told us they wanted to spare other families the frustrations they endured. Some have even created new organizations to support families like theirs or to honor their loved ones, such as the memorial foundation for Steven Sotloff, who wrote: "Everyone has two lives. The second one begins when you realize you only have one." As a Government, and as a nation, we can learn from the example and the strength of their lives, the kind of strength we've seen in all these held hostages, including Kayla Mueller.

Kayla devoted her life to serving those in need around the world. To refugees in Syria who had lost everything, she was a source of comfort and hope. Before her tragic death, she was held by ISIL in Syria for a year and a half.

And during her captivity, Kayla managed to smuggle a letter to her family. She said: "None of us could have known it would be this long, but I know I am also fighting from my side in the ways that I am able, and I have a lot of fight left in me. I am not breaking down, and I will not give in no matter how long it takes."

Today my message to anyone who harms Americans is that we do not forget. Our reach is long. Justice will be done. My message to every American being held unjustly around the world who is fighting from the inside to survive another day, my message to their families who long to hold them once more, is that the United States of America will never stop working to reunite you with your family. We will not give up, no matter how long it takes.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:30 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Diane Foley, mother of James W. Foley, a freelance journalist who was killed by members of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization on August 19, 2014; and Paula Kassig, mother of Abdul-Rahman Kassig, who was killed by members of ISIL on November 16, 2014. He also referred to Executive Order 13698, which is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Directive on United States Nationals Taken Hostage Abroad and Personnel Recovery Efforts
June 24, 2015

Presidential Policy Directive/PPD–30

Subject: U.S. Nationals Taken Hostage Abroad and Personnel Recovery Efforts

The 21st century has witnessed a significant shift in hostage-takings by terrorist organizations and criminal groups abroad. Hostage-takers frequently operate in unstable environments that challenge the ability of the United States Government and its partners and allies to operate effectively. Increasingly, hostage-takers target private citizens—including journalists and aid workers—as well as Government officials. They also utilize sophisticated networks and tactics to derive financial, propaganda, and recruitment benefits from hostage-taking operations. The United States Government's response to hostage-takings must evolve with this ever-changing landscape.

This Presidential Policy Directive (PPD), including its classified annex, supersedes and revokes NSPD–12, *United States Citizens Taken Hostage Abroad*, dated February 18, 2002, along with Annex 1 and Appendix A to NSPD–12, dated December 4, 2008. The policy directs a renewed, more agile United States Government response to hostage-takings of U.S. nationals and other specified individuals abroad. It establishes processes to enable consistent implementation of the policies set forth in this directive, to ensure close interagency coordination in order to employ all appropriate means to recover U.S. hostages held abroad, and to significantly enhance engagement with hostages' families. It also reaffirms the United States Government's personnel recovery policy, which seeks to prevent, prepare for, and respond to hostage-takings and other circumstances in which U.S. nationals are isolated from friendly support. This policy will thereby further important national security and foreign policy interests by strengthening the protections for U.S. nationals outside the United States.

1. Policy

The United States is committed to achieving the safe and rapid recovery of U.S. nationals taken hostage outside the United States. The United States Government will work in a coordinated effort to leverage all instruments of national power to recover U.S. nationals held hostage abroad, unharmed.

The United States Government will strive to counter and diminish the global threat of hostage-taking; reduce the likelihood of U.S. nationals being taken hostage; and enhance United States Government preparation to maximize the probability of a favorable outcome following a hostage-taking.

The United States will use every appropriate resource to gain the safe return of U.S. nationals who are held hostage. But the United States Government will make no concessions to individuals or groups holding U.S. nationals hostage. It is United States policy to deny hostage-takers the benefits of ransom, prisoner releases, policy changes, or other acts of concession. This policy protects U.S. nationals and strengthens national security by removing a key incentive for hostage-takers to target U.S. nationals, thereby interrupting the vicious cycle of hostage-takings, and by helping to deny terrorists and other malicious actors the money, personnel, and other resources they need to conduct attacks against the United States, its nationals, and its interests. However, this policy does not preclude engaging in communications with hostage-takers. For example, when appropriate the United States may assist private efforts to communicate with hostage-takers, whether directly or through public or private intermediaries, and the United States Government may itself communicate with hostage-takers, their intermediaries, interested governments, and local communities to attempt to secure the safe recovery of the hostage.

The taking of a U.S. national hostage abroad is a violation of Federal law, and the United States Government is committed to prosecuting and punishing individuals and groups responsible for hostage-taking and related crimes committed against U.S. nationals.

The United States Government will endeavor to work closely with a hostage's family in a coordinated manner and will proactively share as much information as possible with the family, mindful of the need to protect the safety of the hostage, the integrity of any recovery efforts, any ongoing criminal investigation, and intelligence sources and methods. The United States Government will also provide assistance and support services to help hostages and their families cope with the effects of the hostage-taking during the period of captivity, through the resolution of the hostage event, and throughout any prosecution of the hostage-takers.

2. Prevention and Preparation

The United States Government will take steps to decrease the likelihood that U.S. nationals will be taken hostage abroad. To that end, the Department of State shall continue to assess the threat and security risk for travel outside of the United States and provide safety and security information for U.S. nationals and U.S. organizations operating abroad. Departments and agencies shall also support engagements with private entities that raise awareness of the risk of hostage-taking and identify best practices for preventing hostage-takings abroad.

The United States Government will lead international efforts to counter, marginalize, and deter hostage-taking by increasing the costs to hostage-takers and eliminating the benefits of hostage-taking. This shall include engagement with foreign governments, international organizations, and other relevant nongovernmental organizations to encourage them to adopt and implement no-concessions policies and statements and to seek commitments to defeat and punish hostage-takers and their aiders and abettors. The United States Government shall also seek to deter the practice of hostage-taking through aggressive interdiction, investigation, and prosecution of hostage-taking and related violations of U.S. law, as well as through sanctions designations, as appropriate.

The safe conduct of Federal business and duties abroad requires both an effective personnel recovery infrastructure and a coordinated response capability to resolve hostage-takings and similar events. The United States Government will leverage educational and training resources to help decrease the vulnerability of United States Government officials and employees working abroad. Each department and agency with overseas responsibilities shall inform its employees of U.S. policy re-

garding hostage-takings, and provide personnel recovery preparation, education, and training programs to help their employees understand the risk environment, evade capture, survive captivity, minimize their vulnerability to exploitation, and enable their recovery from a threat environment. Departments and agencies shall also implement individual and organizational protective security measures and ensure there are interoperable systems of communications and support for the accountability of United States Government employees. Each department and agency shall leverage existing programs or develop new ones to offer tailored training for those employees who will participate in response management when U.S. nationals are taken hostage abroad.

Under the direction of the Chief of Mission, United States Government officials shall establish and strengthen relationships and information-sharing with partner nations, including their respective diplomatic, military, intelligence, and law enforcement counterparts, to pursue opportunities to build hostage and personnel recovery capacity through security cooperation. The United States Government shall establish dialogues with foreign counterparts about hostage and personnel recovery training and local capabilities. The United States will also work with international organizations and the private sector, as appropriate, to resolve ongoing hostage events and to prevent future hostage-takings.

When appropriate, the United States may provide training, equipment, advice, and intelligence support to foreign governments to aid them in achieving the capability to safely recover, or to assist in the safe recovery of, U.S. nationals held hostage and to hold perpetrators accountable. Unless otherwise directed by the President, all such efforts and activities will be coordinated among the relevant Federal departments and agencies and with the Department of State. This assistance may be provided by appropriate departments and agencies through existing programs, within and consistent with existing legal authorities.

3. United States Government Coordination in Support of Hostage Recovery

The United States Government shall work diligently to achieve the safe recovery of U.S. nationals held hostage abroad. The United States Government's response—which may include diplomatic outreach, intelligence collection, and investigations in support of developing further options, recovery operations, and the use of any other lawful and appropriate tools—will depend on many factors. When considering how to respond to a hostage situation, the United States Government shall undertake those options that are most likely to secure the hostage's safe release; deter future hostage-taking of U.S. nationals and combat the financing of terrorist and other criminal enterprises; and protect other U.S. national security interests. The United States Government shall endeavor to work with the nation in which a U.S. national is being held hostage, including supporting that nation's efforts to recover the hostage. However, in extraordinary circumstances, the United States Government may also act unilaterally to protect its nationals and national interests.

The taking of a U.S. national hostage abroad requires a rapid, coordinated response from the United States Government. The Hostage Response Group (HRG), in support of the National Security Council (NSC) Deputies and Principals Committees, and accountable to the NSC chaired by the President, shall coordinate the development and implementation of United States Government policy and strategy with respect to U.S. nationals taken hostage abroad. The interagency Hostage Recovery Fusion Cell (HRFC), in support of the HRG, shall coordinate United States Government efforts to ensure that all relevant department and agency information, expertise, and resources are brought to bear to develop individualized strategies to secure the safe recovery of U.S. nationals held hostage abroad.

The Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs, who shall report to the Secretary of State, shall lead diplomatic engagement on U.S. hostage policy as well as coordinate all

diplomatic engagements in support of hostage recovery efforts, in coordination with the HRFC and consistent with policy guidance communicated through the HRG. United States Embassies that have established Personnel Recovery Working Groups or other interagency bodies to coordinate overseas activities in response to a hostage-taking shall ensure that those bodies operate pursuant to policy guidance provided by the HRG and in coordination with the HRFC and with the Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs.

a. Hostage Response Group (HRG)

The HRG shall be chaired by the Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Counterterrorism and shall convene on a regular basis and as needed at the request of the National Security Council. Its regular members shall include the director of the HRFC, the HRFC's Family Engagement Coordinator, and senior representatives from the Department of State, Department of the Treasury, Department of Defense, Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Office of the Director of National Intelligence, and such other executive branch departments, agencies, or offices as the President, from time to time, may designate.

In support of the Deputies Committee chaired by the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism, the HRG shall: (1) identify and recommend hostage recovery options and strategies to the President through the National Security Council; (2) coordinate the development and implementation of U.S. hostage and personnel recovery policies, strategies, and procedures, consistent with the policies set forth in this directive; (3) receive regular updates from the HRFC on the status of U.S. nationals being held hostage abroad and measures being taken to effect the hostages' safe recovery; (4) coordinate the provision of policy guidance to the HRFC, including reviewing recovery options proposed by the HRFC and resolving disputes within the HRFC; and (5) where higher-level guidance is required, make recommendations to the Deputies Committee.

b. Hostage Recovery Fusion Cell (HRFC)

The HRFC shall serve as the United States Government's dedicated interagency coordinating body at the operational level for the recovery of U.S. national hostages abroad. The HRFC shall: (1) identify and recommend hostage recovery options and strategies to the President through the NSC; (2) coordinate efforts by participating departments and agencies to ensure that information regarding hostage events, including potential recovery options and engagements with families and external actors (to include foreign governments), is appropriately shared within the United States Government to facilitate a coordinated response to a hostage-taking; (3) assess and track all hostage-takings of U.S. nationals abroad and provide regular reports to the President through the NSC on the status of such cases and any measures being taken toward the hostages' safe recovery; (4) provide a forum for intelligence sharing and, with the support of the Director of National Intelligence, coordinate the declassification of relevant information; (5) coordinate efforts by participating departments and agencies to provide appropriate support and assistance to hostages and their families in a coordinated and consistent manner and to provide families with timely information regarding significant events in their cases; (6) make recommendations to executive departments and agencies in order to reduce the likelihood of U.S. nationals being taken hostage abroad and enhance United States Government preparation to maximize the probability of a favorable outcome following a hostage-taking; and (7) coordinate with departments and agencies regarding congressional, media, and other public inquiries pertaining to hostage events.

Upon receipt of credible information that a U.S. national has been taken hostage or has been reported missing in a region where hostage-taking is a significant threat, any department or agency with such information shall report that information, along with any action already taken or anticipated in response, to the HRFC and the relevant Chiefs of Mission. If,

at any point in a given hostage event, the HRFC has reason to believe that a U.S. national is being held hostage by an entity or individual designated as a Foreign Terrorist Organization or designated for sanctions by the President, Secretary of State, or Secretary of the Treasury, the HRFC Director shall promptly inform the HRG of the designated individual or entity involved and the circumstances of the hostage-taking.

c. Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs

The Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs (Special Envoy) shall report to the Secretary of State and shall: (1) lead diplomatic engagement on U.S. hostage policy; (2) coordinate all diplomatic engagements in support of hostage recovery efforts, in coordination with the HRFC and consistent with policy guidance communicated through the HRG; (3) coordinate with the HRFC proposals for diplomatic engagements and strategy in support of hostage recovery efforts; (4) provide senior representation from the Special Envoy's office to the HRFC and in the HRG; and (5) in coordination with the HRFC as appropriate, coordinate diplomatic engagements regarding cases in which a foreign government confirms that it has detained a U.S. national but the United States Government regards such detention as unlawful or wrongful.

4. Family and Hostage Engagement

The United States Government will treat all families and hostages equitably and fairly while respecting their dignity and privacy. All interactions with the family should be undertaken with the utmost professionalism, empathy, and sensitivity to the psychological and emotional disruption the family is experiencing and should be informed by the family's needs, wishes, and rights.

The HRFC, through the Family Engagement Coordinator, shall ensure that all interactions with a hostage's family occur in a coordinated fashion and that the family receives consistent and accurate information from the United States Government. The Family Engagement Coordinator shall ensure that all communications between United States Government officials and a hostage's family are coordinated to ensure consistent follow-up on questions and requests, and to ensure that any relevant background regarding the family's particular needs is taken into consideration.

The United States Government shall provide the hostage and his or her family with appropriate assistance and support services, including legally mandated crime victims' rights and services, to help them cope with the physical, emotional, and financial impact of a hostage-taking. United States Government officials shall, subject to the family's wishes, maintain regular contact with the family and ensure continuity of care. As appropriate to meet individual needs, United States Government officials may refer hostages and their families to nongovernmental assistance organizations.

The United States Government will share with a hostage's family as much information as possible, mindful of the reliability and credibility of information provided and the need to protect the safety of the hostage, the integrity of any recovery efforts, any ongoing criminal investigation, and intelligence sources and methods. United States Government officials shall communicate to the family, to the greatest extent possible, information about the circumstances of the hostage's abduction and captivity, what options for the safe recovery of the hostage the United States Government is pursuing, information about relevant law and policy, and the roles and responsibilities of United States Government departments and agencies involved in recovering the hostage. When consistent with each family's preferences and the circumstances of the hostage event, the HRFC shall coordinate efforts by relevant departments and agencies to ensure that the family receives a full informational briefing. The United States Government shall share with the family relevant information, including by making proactive efforts to declassify relevant information or providing unclassified summaries.

The United States Government shall continue to offer appropriate assistance and support services to a hostage and the hostage's family after recovery and through any prosecution of the hostage-takers, consistent with the policies set forth in this directive. The HRFC shall coordinate the delivery of such support services by relevant departments and agencies, including proactive planning for any post-recovery support services that will be provided to a hostage, as appropriate. In the event of a hostage's death in captivity or in the course of a recovery effort, the HRFC shall also coordinate efforts by relevant departments and agencies to ensure that they provide coordinated assistance and support services to the hostage's family.

5. Intelligence Support

The Director of National Intelligence shall provide for centralized management of hostage-related intelligence in order to coordinate the Intelligence Community's efforts on hostage-takings and provide synchronized intelligence support to the HRFC. The Intelligence Community shall make proactive efforts to declassify relevant and reliable information or provide unclassified summaries to a hostage's family.

The Intelligence Community shall maintain the capability to provide intelligence collection and analysis support to allow the United States Government to respond to hostage-takings of U.S. nationals abroad. Moreover, the collection, processing, analysis, and dissemination of intelligence related to hostage-taking incidents shall be a priority for the Intelligence Community when such an incident occurs. In order to improve the United States Government's response capability, departments and agencies shall leverage appropriate intelligence support to pursue diplomatic, military, and law enforcement actions in response to a hostage-taking. Consistent with other provisions in this policy, United States Government departments and agencies may work with private entities to further United States Government interests to locate and recover Americans held hostage abroad, including entities that may assist in gathering or establishing sources of information.

6. Prosecution

The investigation and prosecution of hostage-takers is an important means of deterring future acts of hostage-taking and ensuring that hostage-takers are brought to justice. The United States shall diligently seek to ensure that hostage-takers of U.S. nationals are arrested, prosecuted, and punished through a due process criminal justice system in the United States or abroad for crimes related to the hostage-taking.

The United States has jurisdiction over the taking of a U.S. national hostage abroad, as well as over other criminal acts that may be committed against the hostage, and the Department of Justice will seek to prosecute hostage-taking of U.S. nationals and related violations of U.S. law in the U.S. court system whenever possible. The Federal Bureau of Investigation shall investigate violations of U.S. law and shall collect evidence and conduct forensics in furtherance of a potential prosecution, consistent with its statutory authorities and, where applicable, the permission of the foreign government in whose territory it is operating.

The HRFC shall coordinate efforts by relevant departments and agencies to ensure that all relevant material and information acquired by the United States Government in the course of a hostage-taking event is made available for use in the effort to recover the hostage and, where possible and consistent with that goal, is managed in such a way as to allow its use in an ongoing criminal investigation or prosecution.

The United States Government shall work with foreign governments to apprehend hostage-takers in their territory. In coordination with one another, the Department of State, Department of Justice, and Department of the Treasury shall engage with foreign governments to seek commitments to punish hostage-takers and their aiders and abettors. In coordinating with the Department of State, relevant departments and agencies should also work to develop the capacity of partner nations,

through technical assistance and training in best practices, to collect intelligence for use in hostage recovery efforts while preserving, when possible, opportunities for a criminal prosecution by the United States or the relevant nation.

7. General Provisions

For the purposes of this directive, hostage-taking is defined as the unlawful abduction or holding of a person or persons against their will in order to compel a third person or governmental organization to do or abstain from doing any act as a condition for the release of the person detained. This directive applies to both suspected and confirmed hostage-takings in which a U.S. national, as defined in either 8 U.S.C. 1101(a)(22) or 8 U.S.C. 1408, or a lawful permanent resident alien with significant ties to the United States is abducted or held outside of the United States. This directive shall also apply to other hostage-takings occurring abroad in which the United States has a national interest, such as (but not limited to) hostage-takings of individuals who are not U.S. nationals but who have close links through family, employment, or other connections to the United States, as specifically referred to the HRFC by the Deputies Committee. This directive does not apply if a foreign government confirms that it has detained a U.S. national; such cases are handled by the Department of State in coordination with other relevant departments and agencies. In dealing with such cases, however, the Department of State may draw on the full range of experience and expertise of the HRFC as appropriate, including the HRFC's Family Engagement Coordinator's proficiency in providing and ensuring professionalism, empathy, and sensitivity to the psychological and emotional distress experienced by families in such cases. Additionally, the U.S. response to the detention of U.S. military personnel by non-state forces in the context of armed conflict should, in appropriate circumstances, be informed by the law of war.

This directive does not alter the authorities or requirements applicable to Federal departments and agencies under the Constitution, Federal statutes, or Executive Orders or, except as set forth herein, alter any existing Presidential Directives. This directive does not expand the scope of services otherwise available to lawful permanent resident aliens pursuant to departments' and agencies' existing authorities.

This directive is consistent with and intended to be guided by the NSC process, as described in Presidential Policy Directive/PPD 1 of February 13, 2009, or any successor to PPD 1.

Each department or agency shall review this directive and ensure that its own policies and procedures are consistent with the policies set forth herein.

This directive is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by any party against the United States, its departments, agencies, or entities, its officers, employees, or agents, or any other person.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this directive. The related Executive order is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks at a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Pride Month Reception
June 24, 2015

The President. Hey! Hey! Hey! So this is rowdy crowd. I don't want you guys to break anything while you're here now. [*Laughter*] Thank you, Megan, for the wonderful introduction and, more importantly, the great work that you are doing. We've got some outstanding Members of Congress here today, including Leader Nancy Pelosi. Give Nancy a big round of applause. I want to thank all of you—advocates, organizers, friends, families—for being here today.

Over the years, we've gathered to celebrate Pride Month, and I've told you that I'm so hopeful about what we can accomplish. I've

told you that the civil rights of LGBT Americans is——

Audience member. President Obama——

The President. Yes, hold on a second.

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]—President Obama!

The President. Okay, you know what—no, no, no, no, no, no, no. No, no, no, no, no.

Audience member. President Obama——

The President. Hey——

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Listen, you're in my house. [*Laughter*] And you don't start—you don't—nope, nope, nope. Come on. It's not—you know what, it's not respectful when you get invited to somebody——

Audience member. President Obama—[*inaudible*]—undocumented.

The President. You're not going to—you're not going to get a good response from me by interrupting me like this.

Audience member. President Obama, stop——

The President. I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. No, no, no, no. No, no. No. Shame on you. You shouldn't be doing this.

Audience members. Obama! Obama! Obama!

The President. Can we escort this person out? Come on. You can either stay and be quiet, or we'll have to take you out.

Audience member. Shame on you!

The President. All right, can we have this person removed, please?

The President. Come on.

Audience member. President Obama——

The President. Come on. Come on. Come on. Nope, nope. No. Come on. Come on, guys. I'm just going to wait until we get this done.

Audience member. We love you!

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]—deportations! No one more deportations! No one more deportations! You will not deport——

The President. Okay, where was I? [*Laughter*] So as a general rule, I am just fine with a few hecklers—[*laughter*]—but not when I'm up in the house. You know what I mean? Because you know, my attitude is, if you're eating the hors d'oeuvres—[*laughter*]—you know what I'm saying?

Vice President Joe Biden. I do know what you are saying.

The President. Okay. And drinking the booze. I know that's right. Anyway, where was I?

Audience member. We love you!

The President. I love you back. There we go. I know that.

So the civil rights of LGBT Americans, this is an issue whose time has come. And we've got a lot to celebrate because of your hard work. And there are people here who have been working these issues for decades. And so this is something where it's bearing fruit today, but it has to do with courage that was happening in obscurity and incredible difficulty. And I am so honored to be a part of seeing all that hard work pay off.

A lot of what we've accomplished over these last 6½ years has been because of you. Because of the groundwork that you and so many of you laid before, from sophisticated national campaigns to small, quiet acts of defiance, together, we've been able to do more to protect the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Americans than at any time in our history.

Together, we ended "don't ask, don't tell." We passed a historic hate crimes bill named in part after Matthew Shepard. We lifted the HIV entry ban, and this summer, we're going to be updating our national HIV/AIDS strategy which will focus on eliminating disparities that gay and bisexual men and transgender women face. We strengthened the Violence Against Women Act to protect LGBT victims. Hospitals that accept Medicare and Medicaid are now required to treat LGBT patients the same as everybody else. The pillar of the so-called Defense of Marriage Act was struck down by the Supreme Court as unconstitutional. Just yesterday we announced that insurance companies that cover Federal workers will no longer be able to prohibit gender transition services.

And of course, we're now awaiting the Supreme Court's ruling on whether same-sex couples nationwide have the equal right to marry. There are a few decisions coming down these next few days—[*laughter*]—that I'm paying close attention to. But however the decision comes down on the marriage issue, one

thing is undeniable: There has been this incredible shift in attitudes across the country.

When I became President, same-sex marriage was legal in only two States. Today, it's legal in 37 States and the District of Columbia. A decade ago, politicians ran against LGBT rights. Today, they're running towards them. [*Laughter*] Right? Because they've learned what the rest of the country knows: that marriage equality is about our civil rights and our firm belief that every citizen should be treated equally under the law.

Now, we all know there's a lot more that we can and must do. In 2015, at a time when we have laws that say Americans can't be fired for the color of their skin or their religion or if they have a disability, it is wrong that hard-working Americans still live in fear of being fired simply because of who they are or who they love.

That's why I've repeatedly called on Congress to pass the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, which would explicitly prohibit discrimination against LGBT workers. And that's why we've got to keep the pressure on until they do it.

In the meantime, we're doing what we can to protect workers. Last year, my administration prohibited discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity by Federal contractors, for Federal employees. And that's protecting an estimated 1.5 million Americans.

I support efforts to ban conversion therapy for minors. It has no basis in science. Every young person, no matter who they are or what they look like or what gender they identify as, deserves to be valued and loved for who they are.

In just the past year, America has come far in its acceptance of transgender Americans. And we've got brave folks coming out at the highest levels of business and government and in sports and in Hollywood. We're seeing television shows portray transgender characters and families. And the power of example is slowly but surely changing people's hearts.

But we know that transgender persons still face terrible violence and abuse and poverty here at home and around the world.

Audience member. President Obama, we love you! You must know that transsexuals love you.

The President. Well, see—that's the kind of heckling I can always accept.

But too—seriously, too many folks are still targeted, and transgender women of color are particularly vulnerable. So that kind of ugliness simply doesn't belong in America. That's not who we are.

And the truth is that courage comes in a lot of forms. There's courage in the moment of danger, the kind our troops show in battle. There's the courage of resilience and perseverance, what we see in our brave wounded warriors. There's moral courage of the sort we saw in Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Harvey Milk, who fight for their ideals. And then, there's the kind of courage it takes to be true to yourself even if society doesn't always accept or understand you.

And nobody has got a monopoly on that kind of courage. It can come from all walks of life. And to a young boy or girl out there struggling with their own identity, the folks in this room are heroes, have shown extraordinary courage. Not only are you helping others find the strength to be true to who they are, you're helping America be true to who we are as a nation.

And that's ultimately what this Pride Month is all about. It's about commemorating the bravery at Stonewall, when in the face of hatred and violence, a group of Americans decided to stand up for their rights to be who they are. It's about celebrating the extraordinary progress we've made in making sure that LGBT Americans can enjoy their rights to pursue life, liberty, and happiness. But it's also about pride in who we are as a nation.

We are big and vast and diverse. We've got different backgrounds and different beliefs. We've got different experiences and stories. But we are bound by our shared ideal that no matter who you are or what you look like, where you come from, who you love, this is a place where you should be able to write your own ticket and be who you are and revel in your true self. We're a people who believe enough in America's promise to make it real for everybody.

And those of us who know freedom and opportunity, thanks to the toil and blood of those who came before us, we have an extra responsibility to extend freedom and opportunity to other people who are still marginalized and still facing injustice: working families who aren't getting paid a living wage; women who aren't getting paid equally for their efforts; immigrants who deserve to have a pathway to be able to get right with the law; anybody who is treated differently because of the color of their skin or the nature of their faith; anybody whose right to vote is threatened.

So there are still battles to wage, more hearts and minds to change. As long as there's a single child in America that's afraid they won't be accepted for who they are, we've got more work to do. But if the people in this room and our friends and allies across the country have proven anything, it's that even in the toughest of circumstances, against the greatest possible odds, in America, change is possible. It's in our hands. Together, I know we'll get there. Look how far we've already come.

Thank you. God bless you. Thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:17 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to U.S. Chief Technology Officer Megan Smith.

Remarks on the United States Supreme Court Ruling on the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act
June 25, 2015

Good morning, everybody. Have a seat. Five years ago, after nearly a century of talk, decades of trying, a year of bipartisan debate, we finally declared that in America, health care is not a privilege for a few, but a right for all.

Over those 5 years, as we've worked to implement the Affordable Care Act, there have been successes and setbacks. The setbacks I remember clearly. [*Laughter*] But as the dust has settled, there can be no doubt that this law is working. It has changed, and in some cases saved, American lives. It set this country on a smarter, stronger course.

And today, after more than 50 votes in Congress to repeal or weaken this law, after a Presidential election based in part on preserving or repealing this law, after multiple challenges to this law before the Supreme Court, the Affordable Care Act is here to stay.

This morning the Court upheld a critical part of this law: the part that's made it easier for Americans to afford health insurance regardless of where you live. If the partisan challenge to this law had succeeded, millions of Americans would have had thousands of dollars' worth of tax credits taken from them. For many, insurance would have become unaffordable again. Many would have become uninsured again. Ultimately, everyone's premiums could have gone up. America would have gone backwards. And that's not what we do. That's not what America does. We move forward.

So today is a victory for hard-working Americans all across this country whose lives will continue to become more secure in a changing economy because of this law.

If you're a parent, you can keep your kids on your plan until they turn 26, something that has covered millions of young people so far. That's because of this law.

If you're a senior or an American with a disability, this law gives you discounts on your prescriptions, something that has saved 9 million Americans an average of $1,600 so far.

If you're a woman, you can't be charged more than anybody else, even if you've had cancer or your husband had heart disease or just because you're a woman. Your insurer has to offer free preventive services like mammograms. They can't place annual or lifetime caps on your care because of this law.

Because of this law and because of today's decision, millions of Americans who I hear from every single day will continue to receive the tax credits that have given about 8 in 10 people who buy insurance on the new

marketplaces the choice of a health care plan that costs less than a hundred dollars a month.

And when it comes to preexisting conditions, someday our grandkids will ask us if there was really a time when America discriminated against people who get sick. Because that is something this law has ended for good. That affects everybody with health insurance, not just folks who got insurance through the Affordable Care Act. All of America has protections it didn't have before.

As the law's provisions have gradually taken effect, more than 16 million uninsured Americans have gained coverage so far. Nearly one in three Americans who was uninsured a few years ago is insured today. The uninsured rate in America is the lowest since we began to keep records. And that is something we can all be proud of.

Meanwhile, the law has helped hold the price of health care to its slowest growth in 50 years. If your family gets insurance through your job—so you're not using the Affordable Care Act—you're still paying about $1,800 less per year on average than you would be if we hadn't done anything. By one leading measure, what business owners pay out in wages and salaries is now finally growing faster than what they spend on health insurance. That hasn't happened in 17 years, and that's good for workers, and it's good for the economy.

The point is, this is not an abstract thing anymore. This is not a set of political talking points. This is reality. We can see how it is working. This law's law is working as—exactly as it's supposed to. In many ways, this law is working better than we expected it to. For all the misinformation campaigns, all the doomsday predictions, all the talk of death panels and job destruction, for all the repeal attempts, this law is now helping tens of millions of Americans.

And they've told me that it has changed their lives for the better. I've had moms come up and say, "My son was able to see a doctor and get diagnosed and catch a tumor early, and he's alive today because of this law." This law is working. And it's going to keep doing just that.

Five years in, this is no longer about a law. This is not about the Affordable Care Act as legislation or Obamacare as a political football. This is health care in America.

And unlike Social Security or Medicare, a lot of Americans still don't know what Obamacare is beyond all the political noise in Washington. Across the country, there remain people who are directly benefiting from the law, but don't even know it. And that's okay. There's no card that says "Obamacare" when you enroll. But that's by design, for this has never been a Government takeover of health care, despite cries to the contrary. This reform remains what it's always been: a set of fairer rules and tougher protections that have made health care in America more affordable, more attainable, and more about you, the consumer, the American people. It's working.

And with this case behind us, let's be clear: We've still got work to do to make health care in America even better. We'll keep working to provide consumers with all the tools you need to make informed choices about your care. We'll keep working to increase the use of preventive care that avoids bigger problems down the road. We'll keep working to boost the steadily improving quality of care in hospitals and bring down costs even lower, make the system work even better. Already, we've seen reductions, for example, in the number of readmissions at hospitals. That saves our society money, it saves families money, makes people healthier.

We're making progress. We're going to keep working to get more people covered. I'm going to work as hard as I can to convince more Governors and State legislatures to take advantage of the law, put politics aside, and expand Medicaid and cover their citizens. We've still got States out there that, for political reasons, are not covering millions of people that they could be covering, despite the fact that the Federal Government is picking up the tab.

So we've got more work to do. But what we're not going to do is unravel what has now been woven into the fabric of America. And my greatest hope is that rather than keep refighting battles that have been settled again and

again and again, I can work with Republicans and Democrats to move forward. Let's join together, make health care in America even better.

Three generations ago, we chose to end an era when seniors were left to languish in poverty. We passed Social Security, and slowly, it was woven into the fabric of America and made a difference in the lives of millions of people. Two generations ago, we chose to end an age when Americans in their golden years didn't have the guarantee of health care. Medicare was passed, and it helped millions of people.

This generation of Americans chose to finish the job: to turn the page on a past when our citizens could be denied coverage just for being sick, to close the books on a history where tens of millions of Americans had no hope of finding decent, affordable health care, had to hang their chances on fate. We chose to write a new chapter, where, in a new economy, Americans are free to change their jobs or start a business, chase a new idea, raise a family, free from fear, secure in the knowledge that portable, affordable health care is there for us and always will be, and that if we get sick, we're not going to lose our home; that if we get sick, that we're going to be able to still look after our families.

That's when America soars: when we look out for one another, when we take care of each other, when we root for one another's success, when we strive to do better and to be better than the generation that came before us and try to build something better for generations to come. That's why we do what we do. That's the whole point of public service.

So this was a good day for America. Let's get back to work. [*Laughter*]

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:34 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House.

Statement on Congressional Passage of Trade Promotion Authority and Trade Adjustment Assistance Legislation
June 25, 2015

I applaud the Democrats and Republicans in Congress who came together to give the United States the chance to negotiate strong, high-standard agreements for free and fair trade that protect American workers and give our businesses the opportunity to compete. With bipartisan majorities, Congress also voted to expand vital support for thousands of American workers each year and to bolster economic relations between sub-Saharan Africa and the United States. Of course, we still have more work to do on behalf of our workers, which is why I'll continue to encourage Congress to pass robust trade enforcement legislation that will help us crack down on countries that break the rules. But this week's votes represent a much-needed win for hard-working American families.

As President, I've spent the last 6½ years fighting to grow our economy and strengthen our middle class, and that remains my top priority today. I believe we should make sure that the United States, and not countries like China, write the rules of our global economy. We should support more good jobs that pay good wages. We should level the playing field so that our workers have the chance to compete and win. That's what this new legislation will help us do, and I look forward to signing these bipartisan bills into law as soon as they reach my desk.

NOTE: The statement referred to H.R. 2146; and H.R. 1295.

Remarks on the United States Supreme Court Ruling on Same-Sex Marriage
June 26, 2015

Good morning. Our Nation was founded on a bedrock principle that we are all created equal. The project of each generation is to bridge the meaning of those founding words with the realities of changing times, a never-ending quest to ensure those words ring true for every single American.

Progress on this journey often comes in small increments, sometimes two steps forward, one step back, propelled by the persistent effort of dedicated citizens. And then sometimes, there are days like this, when that slow, steady effort is rewarded with justice that arrives like a thunderbolt.

This morning the Supreme Court recognized that the Constitution guarantees marriage equality. In doing so, they've reaffirmed that all Americans are entitled to the equal protection of the law; that all people should be treated equally, regardless of who they are or who they love.

This decision will end the patchwork system we currently have. It will end the uncertainty hundreds of thousands of same-sex couples face from not knowing whether their marriage, legitimate in the eyes of one State, will remain if they decide to move [to]* or even visit another. This ruling will strengthen all of our communities by offering to all loving same-sex couples the dignity of marriage across this great land.

In my second Inaugural Address, I said that if we are truly created equal, then surely the love we commit to one another must be equal as well. It is gratifying to see that principle enshrined into law by this decision.

This ruling is a victory for Jim Obergefell and the other plaintiffs in the case. It's a victory for gay and lesbian couples who have fought so long for their basic civil rights. It's a victory for their children, whose families will now be recognized as equal to any other. It's a victory for the allies and friends and supporters who spent years, even decades, working and praying for change to come.

And this ruling is a victory for America. This decision affirms what millions of Americans already believe in their hearts: When all Americans are treated as equal, we are all more free.

My administration has been guided by that idea. It's why we stopped defending the so-called Defense of Marriage Act and why we were pleased when the Court finally struck down a central provision of that discriminatory law. It's why we ended "don't ask, don't tell." From extending full marital benefits to Federal employees and their spouses, to expanding hospital visitation rights for LGBT patients and their loved ones, we've made real progress in advancing equality for LGBT Americans in ways that were unimaginable not too long ago.

I know change for many of our LGBT brothers and sisters must have seemed so slow for so long. But compared to so many other issues, America's shift has been so quick. I know that Americans of good will continue to hold a wide range of views on this issue. Opposition in some cases has been based on sincere and deeply held beliefs. All of us who welcome today's news should be mindful of that fact, recognize different viewpoints, revere our deep commitment to religious freedom.

But today should also give us hope that on the many issues with which we grapple, often painfully, real change is possible. Shifts in hearts and minds is possible. And those who have come so far on their journey to equality have a responsibility to reach back and help others join them. Because for all our differences, we are one people, stronger together than we could ever be alone. That's always been our story.

We are big and vast and diverse, a nation of people with different backgrounds and beliefs, different experiences and stories, but bound by our shared ideal that no matter who you are or what you look like, how you started off, or how

* White House correction.

and who you love, America is a place where you can write your own destiny.

We are a people who believe that every single child is entitled to life and liberty and the pursuit of happiness. There's so much more work to be done to extend the full promise of America to every American. But today we can say in no uncertain terms that we've made our Union a little more perfect.

That's the consequence of a decision from the Supreme Court, but more importantly, it is a consequence of the countless small acts of courage of millions of people across decades who stood up, who came out, who talked to parents, parents who loved their children no matter what; folks who were willing to endure bullying and taunts and stayed strong and came to believe in themselves and who they were and slowly made an entire country realize that love is love.

What an extraordinary achievement. What a vindication of the belief that ordinary people can do extraordinary things. What a reminder of what Bobby Kennedy once said about how small actions can be like pebbles being thrown into a still lake and ripples of hope cascade outwards and change the world. Those countless, often anonymous heroes, they deserve our thanks. They should be very proud. America should be very proud.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:14 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House.

Eulogy at the Funeral Service for Pastor Clementa C. Pinckney of the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina
June 26, 2015

The President. Giving all praise and honor to God.

The Bible calls us to hope. To persevere and have faith in things not seen. "They were still living by faith when they died," Scripture tells us. "They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on Earth."

We are here today to remember a man of God who lived by faith. A man who believed in things not seen. A man who believed there were better days ahead, off in the distance. A man of service who persevered, knowing full well he would not receive all those things he was promised, because he believed his efforts would deliver a better life for those who followed.

To Jennifer, his beloved wife; to Eliana and Malana, his beautiful, wonderful daughters; to the Mother Emanuel family, the people of Charleston, the people of South Carolina: I cannot claim to have had the good fortune to know Reverend Pinckney well. But I did have the pleasure of knowing him and meeting him here in South Carolina, back when we were both a little bit younger. [*Laughter*] Back when I didn't have visible gray hair. [*Laughter*] And the first thing I noticed was his graciousness, his smile, his reassuring baritone, his deceptive sense of humor, all qualities that helped him wear so effortlessly a heavy burden of expectation.

Friends of his remarked this week that when Clementa Pinckney entered a room, it was like the future arrived; that even from a young age, folks knew he was special, anointed. He was the progeny of a long line of the faithful, a family of preachers who spread God's word, a family of protesters who sowed change to expand voting rights and desegregate the South. Clem heard their instruction, and he did not forsake their teaching.

He was in the pulpit by 13, pastor by 18, public servant by 23. He did not exhibit any of the cockiness of youth, nor youth's insecurities. Instead, he set an example worthy of his position, wise beyond his years, in his speech, in his conduct, in his love, faith, and purity.

As a senator, he represented a sprawling swath of the Lowcountry, a place that has long been one of the most neglected in America, a

place still wracked by poverty and inadequate schools, a place where children can still go hungry and the sick can go without treatment—a place that needed somebody like Clem.

His position in the minority party meant the odds of winning more resources for his constituents were often long. His calls for greater equity were too often unheeded, the votes he casts were sometimes lonely. But he never gave up. He stayed true to his convictions. He would not grow discouraged. After a full day at the capitol, he'd climb into his car and head to the church to draw sustenance from his family, from his ministry, from the community that loved and needed him. There he would fortify his faith and imagine what might be.

Reverend Pinckney embodied a politics that was neither mean, nor small. He conducted himself quietly and kindly and diligently. He encouraged progress not by pushing his ideas alone, but by seeking out your ideas, partnering with you to make things happen. He was full of empathy and fellow feeling, able to walk in somebody else's shoes and see through their eyes. No wonder one of his senate colleagues remembered Senator Pinckney as "the most gentle of the 46 of us, the best of the 46 of us."

Clem was often asked why he chose to be a pastor and a public servant. But the person who asked probably didn't know the history of the AME church. As our brothers and sisters in the AME church know, we don't make those distinctions. "Our calling," Clem once said, "is not just within the walls of the congregation, but . . . the life and community in which our congregation resides."

He embodied the idea that our Christian faith demands deeds and not just words; that the "sweet hour of prayer" actually lasts the whole week long; that to put our faith in action is more than just individual salvation, it's about our collective salvation; that to feed the hungry and clothe the naked and house the homeless is not just a call for isolated charity, but the imperative of a just society.

What a good man. Sometimes, I think that's the best thing to hope for when you're eulogized: after all the words and recitations and résumés are read, to just say somebody was a good man.

You don't have to be of high station to be a good man. Preacher by 13. Pastor by 18. Public servant by 23. What a life Clementa Pinckney lived. What an example he set. What a model for his faith. And then to lose him at 41, slain in his sanctuary with eight wonderful members of his flock, each at different stages in life, but bound together by a common commitment to God.

Cynthia Hurd. Susie Jackson. Ethel Lance. DePayne Middleton-Doctor. Tywanza Sanders. Daniel L. Simmons. Sharonda Coleman-Singleton. Myra Thompson. Good people, decent people, God-fearing people. People so full of life and so full of kindness. People who ran the race, who persevered. People of great faith.

To the families of the fallen, the Nation shares in your grief. Our pain cuts that much deeper because it happened in a church. The church is and always has been the center of African American life, a place to call our own in a too often hostile world, a sanctuary from so many hardships.

Over the course of centuries, Black churches served as "hush harbors" where slaves could worship in safety; praise houses where their free descendants could gather and shout, "Hallelujah"; rest stops for the weary along the Underground Railroad; bunkers for the foot soldiers of the civil rights movement. They have been and continue to be community centers where we organize for jobs and justice, places of scholarship and network, places where children are loved and fed and kept out of harm's way and told that they are beautiful and smart and taught that they matter. That's what happens in church.

That's what the Black church means. Our beating heart. The place where our dignity as a people is inviolate. And there's no better example of this tradition than Mother Emanuel, a church built by Blacks seeking liberty, burned to the ground because its founder sought to end slavery, only to rise up again, a Phoenix from these ashes.

When there were laws banning all-Black church gatherings, services happened here anyway, in defiance of unjust laws. When there was a righteous movement to dismantle Jim Crow, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., preached from its pulpit and marches began from its steps. A sacred place, this church. Not just for Blacks, not just for Christians, but for every American who cares about the steady expansion of human rights and human dignity in this country, a foundation stone for liberty and justice for all. That's what the church meant.

We do not know whether the killer of Reverend Pinckney and eight others knew all of this history. But he surely sensed the meaning of his violent act. It was an act that drew on a long history of bombs and arson and shots fired at churches, not random, but as a means of control, a way to terrorize and oppress; an act that he imagined would incite fear and recrimination, violence and suspicion; an act that he presumed would deepen divisions that trace back to our Nation's original sin.

Oh, but God works in mysterious ways. God has different ideas.

He didn't know he was being used by God. Blinded by hatred, the alleged killer could not see the grace surrounding Reverend Pinckney and that Bible study group, the light of love that shone as they opened the church doors and invited a stranger to join in their prayer circle. The alleged killer could have never anticipated the way the families of the fallen would respond when they saw him in court, in the midst of unspeakable grief, with words of forgiveness. He couldn't imagine that.

The alleged killer could not imagine how the city of Charleston, under the good and wise leadership of Mayor Riley, how the State of South Carolina, how the United States of America would respond: not merely with revulsion at his evil act, but with big-hearted generosity and, more importantly, with a thoughtful introspection and self-examination that we so rarely see in public life.

Blinded by hatred, he failed to comprehend what Reverend Pinckney so well understood: the power of God's grace. This whole week, I've been reflecting on this idea of grace: the grace of the families who lost loved ones; the grace that Reverend Pinckney would preach about in his sermons; the grace described in one of my favorite hymnals, the one we all know:

> Amazing grace! How sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me!
> I once was lost, but now I'm found; was blind but now I see.

According to the Christian tradition, grace is not earned. Grace is not merited. It's not something we deserve. Rather, grace is the free and benevolent favor of God, as manifested in the salvation of sinners and the bestowal of blessings. Grace.

As a nation, out of this terrible tragedy, God has visited grace upon us, for he has allowed us to see where we've been blind. He has given us the chance, where we've been lost, to find our best selves. We may not have earned it, this grace, with our rancor and complacency and short-sightedness and fear of each other, but we got it all the same. He gave it to us anyway. He's once more given us grace. But it is up to us now to make the most of it, to receive it with gratitude and to prove ourselves worthy of this gift.

For too long, we were blind to the pain that the Confederate flag stirred in too many of our citizens. It's true, a flag did not cause these murders. But as people from all walks of life, Republicans and Democrats, now acknowledge—including Governor Haley, whose recent eloquence on the subject is worthy of praise—as we all have to acknowledge, the flag has always represented more than just ancestral pride. For many, Black and White, that flag was a reminder of systemic oppression and racial subjugation. We see that now.

Removing the flag from this State's capitol would not be an act of political correctness; it would not be an insult to the valor of Confederate soldiers. It would simply be an acknowledgment that the cause for which they fought—the cause of slavery—was wrong. The imposition of Jim Crow after the Civil War, the resistance to civil rights for all people, was wrong. It would be one step in an honest ac-

counting of America's history; a modest, but meaningful, balm for so many unhealed wounds. It would be an expression of the amazing changes that have transformed this State and this country for the better, because of the work of so many people of good will, people of all races striving to form a more perfect Union. By taking down that flag, we express God's grace.

But I don't think God wants us to stop there. For too long, we've been blind to the way past injustices continue to shape the present. Perhaps we see that now. Perhaps this tragedy causes us to ask some tough questions about how we can permit so many of our children to languish in poverty or attend dilapidated schools or grow up without prospects for a job or for a career.

Perhaps it causes us to examine what we're doing to cause some of our children to hate. Perhaps it softens hearts towards those lost young men, tens and tens of thousands caught up in the criminal justice system, and lead us to make sure that that system is not infected with bias; that we embrace changes in how we train and equip our police so that the bonds of trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve make us all safer and more secure.

Maybe we now realize the way racial bias can infect us even when we don't realize it, so that we're guarding against not just racial slurs, but we're also guarding against the subtle impulse to call Johnny back for a job interview, but not Jamal; so that we search our hearts when we consider laws to make it harder for some of our fellow citizens to vote. By recognizing our common humanity, by treating every child as important, regardless of the color of their skin or the station into which they were born, and to do what's necessary to make opportunity real for every American—by doing that, we express God's grace.

For too long——

Audience members. For too long!

The President. For too long, we've been blind to the unique mayhem that gun violence inflicts upon this Nation. Sporadically, our eyes are open: when 8 of our brothers and sisters are cut down in a church basement, 12 in a movie theater, and 26 in an elementary school. But I hope we also see the 30 precious lives cut short by gun violence in this country every single day, the countless more whose lives are forever changed: the survivors crippled, the children traumatized and fearful every day as they walk to school, the husband who will never feel his wife's warm touch, the entire communities whose grief overflows every time they have to watch what happened to them happen to some other place.

The vast majority of Americans—the majority of gun owners—want to do something about this. We see that now. And I'm convinced that by acknowledging the pain and loss of others, even as we respect the traditions and ways of life that make up this beloved country, by making the moral choice to change, we express God's grace.

We don't earn grace. We're all sinners. We don't deserve it. But God gives it to us anyway. And we choose how to receive it. It's our decision how to honor it.

None of us can or should expect a transformation in race relations overnight. Every time something like this happens, somebody says we have to have a conversation about race. We talk a lot about race. There's no shortcut. And we don't need more talk. None of us should believe that a handful of gun safety measures will prevent every tragedy. It will not. People of good will will continue to debate the merits of various policies, as our democracy requires. This is a big, raucous place, America is. And there are good people on both sides of these debates. Whatever solutions we find will necessarily be incomplete.

But it would be a betrayal of everything Reverend Pinckney stood for, I believe, if we allowed ourselves to slip into a comfortable silence again. Once the eulogies have been delivered, once the TV cameras move on, to go back to business as usual—that's what we so often do to avoid uncomfortable truths about the prejudice that still infects our society; to settle for symbolic gestures without following up with the hard work of more lasting change—that's how we lose our way again.

It would be a refutation of the forgiveness expressed by those families if we merely slipped into old habits, whereby those who disagree with us are not merely wrong, but bad, where we shout instead of listen, where we barricade ourselves behind preconceived notions or well-practiced cynicism.

Reverend Pinckney once said: "Across the South, we have a deep appreciation of history. We haven't always had a deep appreciation of each other's history." What is true in the South is true for America. Clem understood that justice grows out of recognition of ourselves in each other, that my liberty depends on you being free too, that history can't be a sword to justify injustice or a shield against progress, but must be a manual for how to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past, how to break the cycle. A roadway toward a better world. He knew that the path of grace involves an open mind, but more importantly, an open heart.

That's what I've felt this week, an open heart. That, more than any particular policy or analysis, is what's called upon right now, I think; what a friend of mine, the writer Marilynne Robinson, calls "that reservoir of goodness, beyond, and of another kind, that we are able to do each other in the ordinary cause of things."

That reservoir of goodness. If we can find that grace, anything is possible. If we can tap that grace, everything can change.

Amazing grace. Amazing grace.

[*At this point, the President sang the first verse of the hymn "Amazing Grace," joined after the first line by audience members, as follows.*]

> Amazing grace! How sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me!
> I once was lost, but now I'm found; was blind but now I see.

[*The President continued his remarks as follows.*]

The President. Clementa Pinckney found that grace. Cynthia Hurd found that grace.

Audience members. Yes!

The President. Susie Jackson found that grace.

Audience members. Yes!

The President. Ethel Lance found that grace.

Audience members. Yes!

The President. DePayne Middleton-Doctor found that grace.

Audience members. Yes!

The President. Tywanza Sanders found that grace.

Audience members. Yes!

The President. Daniel L. Simmons, Sr., found that grace.

Audience members. Yes!

The President. Sharonda Coleman-Singleton found that grace.

Audience members. Yes!

The President. Myra Thompson found that grace.

Audience members. Yes!

The President. Through the example of their lives, they've now passed it on to us. May we find ourselves worthy of that precious and extraordinary gift as long as our lives endure. May grace now lead them home. May God continue to shed His grace on the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:49 p.m. in the TD Arena at the College of Charleston. In his remarks, he referred to South Carolina State Sen. Vincent Sheheen; and Dylann S. Roof, suspected gunman in the June 17 shooting at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, SC.

Statement on the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture
June 26, 2015

Today we mark the anniversary of the United Nations Convention Against Torture, a document that affirms the inherent dignity of all members of the human family. The United States helped draft the Convention, and we have long sought to eradicate torture and all

forms of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment around the world.

Generations of Americans have understood that we must always act with conscience, even in the chaos of war and even when our adversaries may not. Torture is not only inconsistent with our Nation's most deeply held values, but also undermines our national security: by emboldening repressive regimes, by serving as a pretext for terrorist recruitment and violent extremism, and by damaging our reputation as a force for good in the world.

As President, I have made clear that the United States legally prohibits torture without exception and that all U.S. personnel are prohibited from engaging in torture at all times and in all places. I have also reaffirmed our commitment to the Convention Against Torture. No nation is perfect, and the United States must openly confront our past, including our mistakes, if we are to live up to our ideals. That is why I ended the CIA's detention and interrogation program as one of my first acts in office and supported the declassification of key details of that program as documented by the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. I also strongly support Congress' efforts to codify key elements of the Executive order I issued in 2009 on Ensuring Lawful Interrogations.

Torture is unfortunately still too prevalent in the world today, which is why the United States must continue to play a leading role to eradicate it and address the needs of its victims. The United States is the largest supporter of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture and supports a broad range of programs that seek to rehabilitate and reintegrate torture victims. We also back efforts to eradicate torture through human rights training for security forces, capacity building, and improving prison and detention conditions around the world.

Today I salute all the men and women striving to end the scourge of torture. I thank them for reminding governments around the world that upholding the fundamental commitment to human dignity not only makes us who we are, but also makes us stronger and more secure.

The President's Weekly Address
June 27, 2015

Hi, everybody. Five years ago, we finally declared that in America, health care is not a privilege for a few, but a right for all. And this week, after more than 50 votes in Congress to repeal or weaken this law, after a Presidential election based in part on preserving or repealing this law, after multiple challenges to this law before the Supreme Court, we can now say this for certain: The Affordable Care Act still stands, it is working, and it is here to stay.

On Thursday, when the Court upheld a critical part of the Affordable Care Act, it was a victory for hard-working Americans all across this country whose lives are more secure because of this law. This law means that if you're a parent, you can keep your kids on your plan until they turn 26. If you're a senior or an American with a disability, this law gives you discounts on your prescriptions. You can't be charged more just because you're a woman. And you can't be discriminated against just for having a preexisting condition.

This law is working exactly as it's supposed to and, in some ways, better than we expected it to. So far, more than 16 million uninsured Americans have gained coverage. Nearly one in three Americans who was uninsured a few years ago is insured today. The uninsured rate in America is the lowest it's been since we began to keep such records.

The law has helped hold the price of health care to its slowest growth in 50 years. If your family gets insurance through the workplace, not through the Affordable Care Act, you're paying about $1,800 less per year on average than you would be if trends before this law had continued, and that's good for workers, and it's good for the economy.

The point is, this is not some abstract political debate. For all the misinformation campaigns

and doomsday predictions, for all the talk of death panels and job destruction, for all the repeal attempts, this law is helping tens of millions of Americans. This isn't just about Obamacare, this is health care in America.

With this case behind us, we're going to keep working to make health care in America even better and more affordable and to get more people covered. But it's time to stop refighting battles that have been settled again and again. It's time to move on.

Because as Americans, we don't go backwards, we move forwards. We take care of each other. We root for one another's success. We strive to do better, to be better, than the generation before us, and we try to build something better for the generation coming behind us. With this behind us, let's come together and keep building something better right now.

Thanks, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 5:25 p.m. on June 25 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast on June 27. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 26, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on June 27.

Remarks on Signing the Defending Public Safety Employees' Retirement Act and the Trade Preferences Extension Act of 2015
June 29, 2015

Thank you. Well, welcome to the White House. I thought we'd start off the week with something we should do more often: a truly bipartisan bill signing.

For 6½ years, we've worked to rescue the economy from the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression, to get it growing again and to rebuild it on a new foundation for prosperity. Today, our businesses have created more than 12 million new jobs in the past 5 years; that's the longest streak of job growth on record, 401(k)s have been replenished, the housing market is stronger, and more than 16 million Americans have gained the financial security of health insurance.

But a constantly changing economy demands our constant effort to protect hardworking Americans and protect their success. And one of the things we ought to be doing is rewriting the rules of global trade to make sure that they benefit American workers and American businesses and that they reflect American values, especially now, while our economy is in a position of global strength. The two bills that I'll sign today will help America do just that.

The first will help us pass new, 21st-century trade agreements with higher standards and tougher protections than those that we've signed before. The Trans-Pacific Partnership, for example, includes strong protections for workers and the environment. Unlike previous agreements, those provisions will actually be enforceable. And that's good for American businesses and America workers because we already meet high standards than—higher standards than most of the rest of the world. So we want to make sure that everybody else catches up. This agreement will help us level the playing field.

The second bill offers even more support for American workers. It renews and expands the trade adjustment assistance program, which provides job training and other assistance to tens of thousands of American workers every year. It gives us new tools to help American steelworkers and folks in other critical industries fight against unfair practices by other countries. It also reauthorizes AGOA, the African Growth and Opportunity Act, which has had strong bipartisan support for many years now, and which helps open up markets in Africa to American businesses while making it easier for African businesses to sell their products in America. And we're extending a similar program to Haiti and renewing support for other development—developing economies through what's known as the Generalized System of Preferences.

Now, I think it's fair to say that getting these bills through Congress has not been easy. [*Laughter*] They've been declared dead more than once. They have inspired long and passionate debates, and that's entirely appropriate for our democracy. That's how this country is supposed to work. We're supposed to make sure that we air our differences, and then, ultimately, Congress works its will, especially on issues that inspire strongly held feelings on all sides.

But I would not be doing this, I would not be signing these bills if I was not absolutely convinced that these two pieces of legislation are ultimately good for American workers. I would not be signing them if I wasn't convinced they'd be good for American businesses. I would not be signing them if I did not know that they will give us a competitive edge in this new economy and that that new economy cannot be reversed. We have to embrace it.

This legislation will help turn global trade, which can often be a race to the bottom, into a race to the top. It will reinforce America's leadership role in the world: in Asia and in Europe and beyond. If I didn't believe it, I wouldn't have fought so hard to get these things done.

So this is a good day. And I want to thank everybody who has helped us get it—get to this day. We've got small-business owners here, environmental and global development groups, other advocates who were a big part of this campaign. We've got some outstanding Members of Congress, both Republican and Democrat, who came together to make this happen. I want to name just a few. Although Congress is on recess, I think it's important to acknowledge Speaker John Boehner and Leader Mitch McConnell; Senators Orrin Hatch, Ron Wyden, and Patty Murray; Congressmen Paul Ryan, Ron Kind, and Pat Tiberi. And thanks to all the Senators and Representatives who took tough votes and encouraged their colleagues to do the same.

This was a true bipartisan effort. And it's a reminder of what we can get done—even on the toughest issues—when we work together in a spirit of compromise. I hope we're going to be able to summon that same spirit on future challenges, like starting to rebuild some of our roads and bridges and infrastructure—[*laughter*]—around the country, because the American people deserve nothing less from us.

Let me just make one more comment. The trade authorization that's provided here is not the actual trade agreements. So we still have some tough negotiations that are going to be taking place. There has always been concern that people want transparency in those agreements. Under this authorization, these agreements will be posted on a website for a long period of time for people to scrutinize and take a look at and pick apart.

And so the debate on the particular provisions of trade will not end with this bill signing. But I'm very confident that we're going to be able to say at the end of the day that the trade agreements that come under this authorization are going to improve the system of trade that we have right now. And that's a good thing.

I think it's also important to note that trade is just one part of a broader agenda of middle class economics. And so we've still got more work to do on infrastructure. We've still got more work to do on job training. We've still got more work to do on research and development. And we've still got more work to do to make sure that folks are getting good wages for hard work. We've still got too many communities that are left behind around the country. We've still got more work to do to help support our small businesses, who are extraordinary job creators.

So this is not the end of the road; this is just one step in a long path to making sure that the next generation enjoys the extraordinary prosperity that our parents and grandparents passed down to us. And although there are going to be disagreements between the parties on particular elements, I think what we can agree on is that in this country, if you work hard, you should be able to get ahead no matter where you come from, what you look like, or who you love.

With that, let me sign this piece of legislation.

[*At this point, the President signed the bills.*]

All right. For those of you who work for me, get back to work. [*Laughter*]

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:10 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. H.R. 2146, approved June 29, was assigned Public Law No. 114–26. H.R. 1295, approved June 29, was assigned Public Law No. 114–27.

The President's News Conference With President Dilma Rousseff of Brazil
June 30, 2015

President Obama. Please, have a seat. Good morning, everybody—or good afternoon. It is a great pleasure to welcome my partner and friend President Rousseff back to the White House. *Bemvindo.* This is another opportunity for me to reciprocate some of the extraordinary hospitality that Dilma and the people of Brazil showed to me and my family when we visited Brazil. I want to go back. [*Laughter*] I didn't get a chance to experience Carnival. Vice President Biden got to go to the World Cup, not me. But the eyes of the world will be on Brazil again when it hosts the Olympics next year. And that will be another reminder of Brazil's remarkable rise, both at home and on the world stage.

As President, I've pursued a new era of engagement with Latin America where our countries work together as equal partners, based on mutual interest and mutual respect. As we saw at the recent Summit of the Americas, the United States is more deeply engaged in the region than we've been in decades, and I believe the relationship between the United States and Latin America is as good as it's ever been. We're focused on the future, what we can accomplish together. And a cornerstone of our engagement with the region is a strong partnership with Brazil.

I believe our two nations are natural partners, in the Americas and around the world. As two of the world's largest democracies, we understand the aspirations of citizens to live in freedom. Dilma, the sacrifices you've made personally in your own life are a testament to that determination. As two multiracial, multiethnic societies, we know that countries are stronger when they uphold the rights of all people, a truth we reflected on yesterday when we visited the memorial to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

As two of the world's largest economies, we understand that lasting prosperity and confronting the injustices of poverty and inequality can only come when we truly invest in our people, their education, their skills, their ability to work and live with dignity. And these are the enduring interests and values that bind us together.

Now, no relationship between countries is without disagreements. The United States and Brazil are no different. It's often tempting, I suspect, to focus on whatever challenges there may be in the moment. But in steps that often don't make the headlines, the work of our nations has gone on. And over the years, President Rousseff and I have steadily deepened the ties between our countries.

We partner on global challenges, from promoting open government to combating human trafficking to advancing development in Africa. Since I took office, we've boosted American exports to Brazil by more than 50 percent and our bilateral trade has reached record levels, surpassing $100 billion a year. We've expanded collaborations in science and technology and the ties between our people, especially our young people. As part of our 100,000 Strong in the Americas initiative, more Brazilian students come to the United States, and more American students go to Brazil. And that's real, concrete progress that we've made together.

Of course, President Rousseff and I believe that, given how closely our national interests and values align, there's much more that the United States and Brazil can be doing together. Dilma, I want to thank you for your personal commitment to taking the partnership between our countries to the next level. And

that's what we've done today, across a range of areas.

First, we're announcing a series of new steps to boost trade and investment that creates jobs for our peoples. With Brazil's recent announcement on infrastructure, American companies will have more opportunities to compete for projects to develop Brazil's highways, airports, ports, and railways. We'll make it easier and more affordable for companies to hire workers in each other's countries. We'll do more to help our small and medium-sized businesses and entrepreneurs connect and collaborate and export. And as leaders in science and technology, we've agreed to increase partnerships between our colleges and universities as we develop the next generation of scientists and researchers.

Second, as major economies, the United States and Brazil will continue to lead in the fight against climate change. Since 2005, our two nations have reduced carbon emissions more than any other countries in the world. In Brazil, this includes very impressive efforts over the past decade to combat deforestation, including in the Amazon, what's sometimes called the "lungs of the planet." Together, our countries are leaders in clean energy.

So today we're taking important new steps. As we work toward a strong global climate agreement in Paris, I thank our Brazilian friends for previewing elements of their post-2020 targets for reducing emissions, including substantial new goals to eliminate illegal deforestation and restore forests. Both our nations are setting new goals on clean energy. Beyond hydropower, the United States and Brazil will aim to increase the share of electricity we generate from renewable energy to 20 percent by the year 2030.

These are very ambitious goals: a near tripling for the United States and more than double Brazil's current output. Following progress during my trips to China and India, this shows that the world's major economies can begin to transcend some of the old divides and work together to confront the common challenge that we face, something that we have to work on for future generations. And I'm confident that this will lead to a strong outcome in Paris.

Third, we're working to deepen our defense cooperation. Under President Rousseff's leadership, two important agreements were approved by Brazil's Congress last week and are now in effect. Going forward, it will be easier for our two militaries to train together, to share more information and technology, and to cooperate during missions such as disaster response and peacekeeping. And I want to thank you publicly, Dilma, for making this progress.

And finally, we're working together to uphold democracy and human rights across Latin America. I very much appreciate President Rousseff and Brazil's strong support for our new opening toward Cuba. I updated Dilma on our progress, including our work to open Embassies in Havana and Washington. And I believe that Brazil's leadership in the region, as well as its own journey to democracy and a market economy, can make it an important partner as we work to create more opportunities and prosperity for the Cuban people.

In short, I believe that this visit marks one more step in a new, more ambitious chapter in the relationship between our countries. We are focused on the future. Dilma, thank you for your friendship, your partnership, and the progress that we've achieved together. As we look ahead to the Olympics next summer, we Americans will be cheering proudly for Team U.S.A. [*Laughter*] We'll all be rooting for truly great games with Brazil as our host. Dilma did give me a very nice yellow-and-green sweatshirt—[*laughter*]—which says "Brazil" on the back. I can't wear that in public—[*laughter*]—because I have to root for the U.S.A. But at home, at night, it's very comfortable. So who knows? I might slip it on.

So, President Rousseff, thank you.

President Rousseff. Greetings to our dear President Barack Obama. Greetings likewise to all Cabinet ministers, members of the two attending delegations. Greetings likewise to all members and persons attending this session: photographers, camera man and women.

I'd like to thank President Barack Obama as well as the U.S. people for the hospitality with

which they have welcomed me ever since I got here and ever since I came to the U.S. through New York. This morning and last evening, President Barack Obama and I have had very fruitful, productive meetings, during which we have celebrated an upward trajectory in our relations. We have also established a robust bilateral agenda in areas such as trade, investments, climate change, energy, education, defense, science, technology, and innovation.

We have reinforced our dialogue on topics of the international agenda such as the environment and sustainable development, factors that are indeed key and essential for the world and for each of our countries. We also focused on economic governance, financial governance, peace, and security. The economic recovery of the United States is an extremely positive development for the world economy and certainly also for the Brazilian economy. Our bilateral trade is very substantial and is based on higher value-added products.

We want to further expand and diversify our exchanges, and here our challenge consists in doubling our trade current within one decade. The ultimate objective consists in building the conditions to ensure an ambitious trade relationship between Brazil and the United States. To that end, in the short term, we should remove especially the nontariff obstacles that are in place for industrial goods and agricultural goods. We should slash down bureaucracy and redtape and do away with the very complicated permits, restrictions. And we would also like, of course, the high quality of production processes in Brazil be duly acknowledged.

In the short term, our priority agenda will focus on two topics as we wish. Number one, regulatory standards convergence and harmonization of technical standards. Number two, trade facilitation through a single window system to streamline and simplify the timeframes involved in customs procedures. We would also like to cooperate with the U.S. patent offices, although it is a matter that involves intellectual property. There are positive impacts by means of investments as we expand the degree of technology incorporated into Brazilian products.

The U.S. is the main investor—foreign investor in Brazil. In 2013, the total aggregate direct investments from the U.S. in Brazil came to $116 billion. Brazilian investments in the U.S. have grown. In 2013, the total or aggregate amount of Brazilian investments in the U.S. came to $15.7 billion. These figures, nevertheless, do not truly represent the order of magnitude of these investments. And it is important to indicate that between 2007 and 2012, the growth of foreign direct investments by Brazil in the U.S. came to 221 percent in terms of the actual increase between 2007 and 2012. We want to further expand these flows—investments and trade flows—and we want them to be higher given the actual potentialities available in our two economies.

And that is one of the objectives of the efforts we have engaged in to further strengthen our macroeconomic policies, thus reducing risks for both Brazilian investments and foreign investments in Brazil. We have also developed a microeconomic agenda, therefore reducing or lessening regulatory risk, expanding the transparency or accountability of processes, and also the proper governance of relations between companies and the government.

We're also expanding the investments opportunity—opportunities in one area where coordination by the government is absolutely key in terms of setting the right expectations. I'm talking about the infrastructure area. We have launched an ambitious logistics infrastructure program. And we hope—and we thank President Obama for his commitment in ensuring a greater presence of U.S. investors in that process, the logistics development program.

I would also like to say that we have enjoyed a fruitful relationship between our two governments and the business communities. The recent CEO—bilateral CEO forum held in Brazil, it provided us with important suggestions such as, for example, the establishment or setting up of an infrastructure information center to identify, coordinate, and promote investment projects, as well as the suggestion of development—of developing financial tools and guarantees for investments in the long term,

with a view to stimulating private sector involvement.

We also have a wide array of several other opportunities and achievements. In areas such as the defense arena, for example, we welcome the two agreements recently passed by Congress: the Defense and Cooperation Agreement which will allow a very fruitful cooperation between the Brazilian Ministry of Defense as well as the U.S. counterpart ministry of defense; the military information agreement, GSOMIA, on military information which will allow exchange of information in that area.

In the field of technology—biotechnology, air and space technology—I'd like to highlight one point that President Obama and I discussed and one on which we have come to a decision which I view as very important. I'm talking about climate change. Climate change is one of the central challenges of the 21st century. And we have one important objective, which is, number one, to ensure that the energy mix in our two countries will have a substantial share of renewable sources of energy.

The decision has a great deal to do with the current outlook and our involvement as part of the global emissions reductions agreement so that we are indeed in a position to materialize that agreement during the upcoming COP conference, COP 21, to be held in Paris.

The second area is very much related to the first one, which is the joint decision by our two countries to establish a 20-percent goal in terms of expanding the renewable share of sources of energy, except for the hydro sources, between now and 2020. I very much welcome that decision because it will prove extremely important in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. And also, it speaks to our clear-cut commitment of ensuring that the environment and also efforts to make sure the global temperature will not go up beyond 2 degrees, as agreed.

As countries that are as vast as continents, we have this very important greenhouse gas emissions target. We attach a great deal of importance to reduce not only deforestation, as we have done. Actually, in Brazil, we have the commitment to come to a zero deforestation—or a zero illegal deforestation rate between now and 2030.

And we also wish to turn the page and engage in a clear-cut reforestation-oriented policy. That is an extremely important point for Brazil, and it also reflects the commitment we ourselves have undertaken as part of the forest code in effect in Brazil.

So the environmental agenda, in my view, is absolutely key and essential for our two countries. Cooperation in energy efficiency, for example: We are committed to putting in place smart grids. We're also committed to minimum consumption levels—energy consumption levels. We're also committed to establishing efficient equipment and buildings.

President Obama and I also discussed education extensively in our meetings. We believe that education in Brazil will provide us with two gains. Number one, social inclusion so as to make sure that these social gains become permanent gains. And number two, the qualitative leap forward as regards our competitiveness towards the knowledge economy.

And that is why we are most pleased to see our agreement on cooperation in technical vocational education between the Brazilian Ministry of Education and the Brazilian Department of Education. We are most pleased about that agreement.

We also wish to establish partnerships between the government research institutes in each of our two countries with a view to achieving scientific, technological improvement, as well as innovation. I would also like to stress the importance of using education technologies as a means to move towards higher quality, more inclusive education. In that regard, without a shadow of a doubt, the high quality, as well as the ability of the United States to develop scientific and technological research in that arena has proved very important.

May I also state for the record that we attach a great deal of importance to cooperation as part of the Science Without Borders program. As part of that program, the Science Without Borders program, an important highlight is the fact that the U.S. has received the biggest

number of Brazilian students. The U.S. has become the main destination of Brazilian students who are beneficiaries of the Science Without Borders program. May I thank President Obama for having welcomed such a substantial wave of Brazilian grantees. I have often said, time and again, to President Obama that it is our ambition to change our cooperation in innovation into one of the central topics on our agenda.

We also want to make progress in our energy cooperation, particularly between the linkages between the Argonne National Laboratory and the Brazilian Research Center in Energy and Materials, CNPEM. Tomorrow I will be in California, and while in California, I intend to hold a very instigating meeting with information technology, biotechnology, and air and space companies.

I'd also like to thank President Obama because we have come to a decision to facilitate entry of frequent travelers from Brazil into the United States as part of the Global Entry program. We have also signed a very important agreement for the Brazilian population living and working in the United States. I'm talking about the Social Security agreement that will allow the Brazilians working in Brazil—in the U.S. to be equally covered under the Social Security agreement.

We also addressed a wide array of different initiatives. I'd like to essentially highlight the following initiatives: the decision by Brazil to join the Global Health Security Initiative, GHSI. I think it is also very important to underscore that we have a wide array of joint initiatives that can be developed and put in place in third-party countries, or triangular cooperation, particularly for the purpose of fuel production.

In conclusion, may I refer to the importance for Latin America of the recent decision made by President Obama and by President Raúl Castro, even with the partnership with Pope Francis, to the effect of opening up relations with—or resuming relations with Cuba, a very decisive milestone and point in time in U.S. relations with Latin America. It is really about the—putting an end to the lingering vestiges of the cold war. And it ultimately, elevates the level of the relations between the U.S. and the entire region.

May I acknowledge the importance of that gesture to all of Latin America and also to world peace at large. It is an important example of relations to be followed.

In conclusion, may I reiterate my invitation for President Obama to come to Brazil for the 2016 Olympics. I count on you. And of course, the invitation is extensive to the Vice President, but I understand both of them are not able to be at the same time, at the same place abroad. The same is true for Brazil. But anyway, President Obama has a standing invitation to come to the 2016 Olympics in Rio, in Brazil. And while in Brazil, he will be able to wear his green-and-yellow jersey or garment, which says "Brazil" and also "Obama" on the chest. And I'm sure you will be applauded, President Obama, if you do so.

And I also believe that this trip to the United States stands as a relaunch of our bilateral relations. So having said that, once again may I thank President Obama and the U.S. people for the warm reception, for the welcome. And may I say that we have indeed taken one step ahead in our bilateral relations.

Thank you very much.

President Obama. All right, we're going to take a few questions, and I'm going to start with Jim Kuhnhenn [Associated Press], who I understand announced his retirement today. Jim, you're kind of young to retire, man.

Q. [*Inaudible*]

President Obama. While you're ahead?

Q. Yes.

President Obama. Well, we're going to miss you, but you're going to be here for a couple of weeks, right?

Q. Right.

President Obama. Congratulations.

Q. It's been a privilege to cover the White House.

President Obama. Appreciate it.

U.S. Citizens Detained or Missing in Iran/Iran's Nuclear Weapons Program

Q. Sir, you're on the cusp of entering into a nuclear agreement with Iran, but there's still a number of unresolved issues with Tehran, in particular, the fates of Americans like Jason Rezaian, Amir Hekmati, Saeed Abedini, Robert Levinson. You and your administration say you're continuing to raise the imprisonment and disappearance of these individuals, these Americans. But still, you will sign—likely—an agreement with Tehran, and those issues will remain unresolved. What do you say to them, to the families, about how you will deal with their loved ones? And I guess the bottom line is, do you find the Iranian leadership trustworthy?

And, Madam President, welcome to the U.S. You canceled a previous trip to the United States following the Snowden revelations of—do you need a translation? All right. Of NSA spying——

President Rousseff. Can you talk——

President Obama. A little louder.

Q. A little louder, certainly. [*Laughter*] You canceled a previous trip to the United State following the revelations of—by Edward Snowden of NSA spying on you. Are you still troubled by those revelations? And have you received assurances, and are you satisfied with the answers you have received from the administration?

Thank you.

President Obama. Well, first of all, Jim, with respect to U.S. citizens, U.S. persons who are held in Iran, this is something that we continue to push hard on irrespective of the nuclear deal. It's a top priority for us to make sure that our people are treated fairly. And on the face of it, in the case of these individuals who've been held, they have not been, and they are not being afforded the basic due process and legal rights that we afford visitors to our country.

So we're deeply concerned about it. We spend a lot of time pushing on it, and we will continue to do so. And there's no lessening of the sense of urgency. So when I talk to the families, we remind them of the fact that that is a mission that will continue and has been worked on consistently throughout their captivity.

With respect to the larger issue of whether I trust the Iranian regime, as I've said before, there are deep-seated disagreements and divisions between the United States and Iran, and those aren't going to go away overnight. The goal of the nuclear negotiations is not to rely on trust, but to set up a verifiable mechanism where we are cutting off the pathways for Iran to obtain a nuclear weapon.

And John Kerry right now is there, along with Secretary of Energy Moniz, who's one of the top nuclear physicists in the world. They are deeply engaged in negotiations. My hope is that they can achieve an agreement, but my instructions to them have been extremely clear: The framework agreement that was established at Lausanne is one that, if implemented effectively and codified properly, would, in fact, achieve my goal, which is Iran not obtaining a nuclear weapon.

There has been a lot of talk on the other side from the Iranian negotiators about whether, in fact, they can abide by some of the terms that came up in Lausanne. If they cannot, that's going to be a problem, because I've said from the start, I will walk away from the negotiations if in fact it's a bad deal. If we can't provide assurances that the pathways for Iran obtaining a nuclear weapon are closed, and if we can't verify that, if the inspections regime—the verification regime—is inadequate, then we're not going to get a deal. And we've been very clear to the Iranian Government about that.

And the good news is, is that our P5-plus-1 partners in these negotiations feel exactly the same way. So there are still some hard negotiations to take place, but ultimately, this is going to be up to the Iranians to determine whether or not they meet the requirements that the international community has set forth to be able to fairly and accurately and consistently assess whether or not they have foreclosed the possibility of obtaining a nuclear weapon. And given past behavior on the part of Iran, that can't simply be a declaration by Iran and a few inspectors wandering

around every once in a while; that's going to have to be a serious, rigorous verification mechanism. And that, I think, is going to be the test as to whether we get a deal or not. Okay?

President Rousseff. Yes, it is true. Yes, it is true, I did cancel my previous trip to the U.S. at that point in time. Since then, some things have changed, and the change is particularly due to the fact that President Obama and the U.S. Government have stated on several occasions that they would no longer engage in intrusive acts of spying [on][*] friendly countries. I believe President Obama. And furthermore, he has told me that if he needed—should he ever need nonpublic information about Brazil, he would just pick up the phone and call me. So yes, I am certain that the conditions today have become very different.

At this point, I would like to call upon journalist Sandra Coutinho with the Globo News Network.

Brazil-U.S. Relations

Q. [*Inaudible*]—all the help you can get.

President Obama. Well, the—if Brazil is playing somebody else, then maybe I'll——

Q. Somebody else, sure.

President Obama. If they're playing the United States, I'm sorry. [*Laughter*]

Q. No, no, no, not against the United States.

Okay, Mr. President, you were talking about a new relationship based on trust, and President Dilma just mentioned when Brazil canceled this trip because a matter of trust. And Brazil is also in the middle of a very deep political and economical crisis. Can you trust in this moment to build this new chapter?

President Obama. Well, my relationship——

Q. And President——

President Obama. Oh, I'm sorry, go ahead.

Q. I'm sorry.

[*At this point, the reporter asked a question in Portuguese, which was translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

Madam President, Brazil views itself as a global player and leader in the world scene, and the U.S. sees Brazil as a regional player. How do you reconcile or strike a balance between those two visions?

President Obama. Well, I'm actually going to answer in part the question you just asked the President. We view Brazil not as a regional power, but as a global power. If you think about the preeminent economic forum for coordinating between major economies, the G–20, Brazil is a major voice in that. The negotiations that are going to be taking place in Paris around climate change can only succeed with Brazil as a key leader. And the announcements that have been made today about their goals on renewable energy are—is indicative of Brazil's leadership.

Brazil is a major global player. And I told President Dilma last night that the United States, as powerful as we are and as interested as we are in solving a whole range of international issues, recognizes, we can't do it alone. On issues like global health, we're not going to succeed unless we're working with Brazil and other major countries so that we can identify where there might be the outbreak of a disease, how we prevent it from turning into a pandemic. If we want to be successful on climate change, on countering terrorism, on making sure that we are reducing extreme poverty around the world, all the major countries have to be involved in that process. And Brazil we consider to be an absolutely indispensable partner in these efforts.

With respect to trust, I will say that President Rousseff and I have had an excellent relationship since she took office. I trust her completely. She's always been very candid and frank with me about the interests of the Brazilian people and how we can work together. She's delivered on what she's promised. When we met in Panama, we discussed, for example, the defense cooperation agreements that were just mentioned. She got those through Congress. As somebody who knows something about Congresses—[*laughter*]—that—I know that's never easy. So for her to use political capital in order to get that done, I think, is in-

[*] White House correction.

dicative of the kind of reliable partner that she is.

And so we believe that this meeting that we've had this week builds on a series of steps that have continued to deepen cooperation between our two countries. There are still going to be differences occasionally, but that's true with every one of our close friends and allies. No country is going to have identical interests. There will always be some frictions. But our common values, the strong people-to-people relations that we have, the fact that we are the largest countries in the hemisphere with similar histories—I think all that means that we should be very strong partners for years to come.

President Rousseff. Well, I believe that part of my answer was given by President Obama, and I'd like to thank him for that. But I'd like to still make the following remark. Countries do go through crises and difficulties. It's just natural. And the fact that countries experience difficulties and/or crises should not entail a lesser role for any country, especially because a country can only be said to be a great country if it is able to successfully overcome difficulties. That applies to countries, to people. It applies to everything in life: one's braveness to overcome difficulties, challenges, and face up to them and still sustain and uphold the commitment towards one's people and country.

It also applies to relations with countries such as the U.S. and the rest of the world. These are essential relations. I think Brazil and the U.S. have a great deal in common. We are two countries that have a hallmark in our history, something that we actually had to fight to overcome. I'm talking about the blemish of slavery. We have large Black populations in our two countries. We are countries marked by a very significant ethnic and multicultural variety in our population makeup. And that is a major asset, the wonderful heritage in our population. The same is true for the U.S.

We are also two strong democracies. Brazil, just as is the case of the United States—and I even congratulated President Obama for having overcome the crisis that struck this country back in 2008 and 2009, and likewise, Brazil will overcome the effects of the current crisis that strikes Brazil. And we will do so very surefootedly, very decisively, with great—a great sense of commitment.

More than that, we will not only resume growth, but we will uphold and ensure continuity of all of the gains and achievements that we have established in the past 12 years—in the course of the past 12 years. And we will make sure that these gains multiply into the future. We truly want to build a predominantly middle class country. I think the efforts to reduce inequality are a major gain, and we must fight to preserve those gains.

Greece/Trade Promotion Authority Legislation/Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act/The President's Eulogy for Reverend Clementa C. Pinckney in Charleston, South Carolina/The President's Legislative Agenda

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. I hope you don't mind if I ask a multipart question, the first one being on Greece. I would be remiss if I didn't ask about the prospect of a financial crisis in Europe. And I—just in layman's terms, in language that Americans can understand, I just want to ask simply: Is a financial crisis in Greece capable of bringing down the global economy?

And separately, sir, I wanted to ask you about what some people were calling your best week ever. Last week, you had two Supreme Court decisions supportive of the Affordable Care Act and of gay rights. You also delivered a speech down in Charleston that was pretty warmly received. It seems that you've built up some political capital for the remaining months of your Presidency. I'm curious how you want to use it. What hard things do you want to tackle at this point?

And, President Rousseff, if I may ask you, you extended an invitation to the President to join him—join you at the Olympics in Rio next year. The terrorist group ISIS has shown and willingness and capacity to carry out terrorist attacks around the world. What preparations are you making to make sure that the Olympic Games are safe? And are you concerned about that happening in Rio?

Thank you very much, Madam President.

President Obama. Good. On Greece, this is a situation that we've been monitoring throughout the year. As I think most people are aware, there has been an ongoing crisis in Greece, dating back to 2009–2010. And it's something that I've been deeply involved with periodically, working with our European partners.

It is an issue of substantial concern. It is an issue primarily of concern to Europe. Essentially, what you have here is a country that is—has gone through some very difficult economic times, needs to find a path towards growth and a path to stay in the eurozone. And what we've been encouraging both the Greek Government and our European partners to do is to continue to negotiate and find a pathway towards a resolution.

It is also important for us to make sure that we plan for any contingency and that we work with the European Central Bank and other international institutions to make sure that some of the bumps that may occur in the financial markets, and that have already occurred, are smoothed out.

In layman's terms for the American people, this is not something that we believe will have a major shock to the system. But obviously, it's very painful for the Greek people, and it can have a significant effect on growth rates in Europe. And if Europe is not growing the way it needs to grow, that has an impact on us; it has an impact on Brazil. Those are major export markets. And that can have a dampening effect on the entire world economy.

So it's something that we are monitoring. It's something that we spend a lot of time on. Jack Lew has been on the phone fairly consistently over the last several months. I've spoken to my European counterparts encourage—encouraging them to find a path towards resolution. So it's something that we take seriously, but it's not something that I think should prompt overreactions. And so far, I think the markets have properly factored in the risks involved.

In terms of my best week—[*laughter*]—now, my best week, I will tell you, was marrying Michelle. [*Laughter*] That was a really good week. Malia and Sasha being born, excellent weeks. [*Laughter*]

Q. Good thing you remembered those.

President Obama. Yes. There was a game where I scored 27 points. [*Laughter*] That was a pretty good week. I've had some good weeks in my life, I will tell you. And I'm blessed to have had those.

I think last week was gratifying because, number one, we were able to get a package of trade legislation that I believe will serve the American people, American workers, and American businesses well going into the future. It gives us the opportunity to negotiate high-standards agreements that have enforceable labor and environmental provisions. It was a tough fight because there were a lot of folks in my own party who viewed this as accelerating some of the damaging or frightening trends around globalization that have taken place over the last several decades. My argument to them has consistently been that we're not going to stop globalization—we have to shape it in a way that helps people—and that these are tools that are going to help us do that. But being able to get that done was very important.

The Affordable Care Act, as I said before, the results I think speak for themselves. We have the lowest uninsured rate that we've had since we started keeping records. It's worked better, cost less than even supporters anticipated.

And if we can get some Governors that have been holding out and resisting expanding Medicaid primarily for political reasons to think about what they can do for their citizens who don't have health insurance, but could get it very easily if State governments acted, then we could see even more improvement over time.

My remarks at Charleston were heartfelt. It wasn't a celebration. It was, I think, a reflection on the consistent challenge of race in this country and how we can find a path towards a better way. And I was gratified to see not only the incredible response of the families who had been affected by this tragedy, but by the response of people like Governor Haley in how they viewed the issue of the Confederate flag. As I said on Friday, I think it doesn't solve all our problems. But what it does is signify a

sense of empathy and recognition that I think is always the start of progress.

So in many ways, last week was simply a culmination of a lot of work that we've been doing since I came into office. How am I going to spend whatever political capital that I've built up? The list is long. And my instructions to my team and my instructions to myself have always been that we are going to squeeze every last ounce of progress that we can make when I have the privilege of—as long as I have the privilege of holding this office.

We announced overtime rules that I'm going to be talking about more this week. That's going to give a raise to 5 million people, potentially, in this country who really deserve it. I want to see if we can get bipartisan work done with Congress around rebuilding our infrastructure. Brazil just talked about their rebuilding of highways and roads and ports and bridges. You know what, we've got the same work to do and we need to put people back to work there.

I am really interested in the possibilities, the prospect of bipartisan legislation, around the criminal justice system, something that I think directly speaks to some of the themes I mentioned on Friday. And we've seen some really interesting leadership from some unlikely Republican legislators very sincerely concerned about making progress there.

I want to keep on making progress on job training and making sure that the idea of 2 years of free community college starts taking root. Man, the list is long. And what we're going to do is just keep on hammering away at all the issues that I think are going to have an impact on the American people. Some of them will be left undone. But we're going to try to make progress on every single one of them.

And I've always said in—one of the things I've learned in this Presidency is that there are going to be ups and there are going to be downs, but as long as my focus and my team's focus is on what is going to make a difference in the lives of ordinary Americans; are we going to give them more opportunity if—so that if they work hard, they can get ahead; are we going to make this a more inclusive economy, a more inclusive society, a more fair, just society—if that's our north star and we keep on tacking in that direction, we're going to make progress. And I feel pretty excited about it. So I might see if we can make next week even better. [*Laughter*]

Q. Another press conference?

President Obama. I love press conferences. It's my press team that's always holding me back. [*Laughter*] I want to talk to you guys every day. [*Laughter*] Sorry, Josh. [*Laughter*]

President Rousseff. We take the issue of security in large events very seriously. We take the question of security in large-scale events as a very serious issue, which means that we involve all of those bodies or agencies that can and will ensure proper security during the upcoming Olympics. They include the armed forces, the federal police service, and all of the state-level police bodies in the State of Rio de Janeiro.

We already have experience in the public security arena because last year we organized and staged the World Soccer Cup, and we did—had to provide security not only to just one city—rather, we had to cover the whole country. And there was not one single action that was left uncontrolled in the 12 different host cities of the World Cup in Brazil, thereby establishing a very effective control system by means of command-and-control centers, as well as monitoring control centers, covering all activities including the displacement of athletes as well as high-ranking government officials and authorities.

So we followed up on and ensured proper security conditions to all of those steps. And that is why I am certain that we will be in a position to ensure absolute security during the Olympics, just as was the case during last year's World Soccer Cup.

I actually believe that the upcoming 2016 Olympics to be held next June-July in Rio will be a unique and special occasion because it will bring together the joy of the Brazilians and the beauty of Rio. Of course, each country tends to think that they have the world's best city. But I think Rio de Janeiro is indeed the world's best and most beautiful city.

So the Olympics will bring together excellent organizational capabilities and also the wonderful ability of Brazilians to welcome and receive visitors and athletes. And all of those who wish to come to Brazil, you have a standing invitation to come to the Olympics because we will certainly ensure not only proper security conditions, but also we will make sure you will be able to enjoy beautiful and great celebration during the upcoming Olympics.

Let me now call up our São Paulo Daily Newspaper reporter, Raul Lores, for the second question.

Class-Action Lawsuit Against Petroleo Brasileiro SA/Open Government Initiative/U.S. Supreme Court Ruling on Same-Sex Marriage

Q. Petrobras, our state-owned oil giant, is being sued by many American investors who lost millions of dollars and is being investigated by the Department of Justice because of allegations of corruption. Is it an issue of concern?

[*The reporter continued in Portuguese, and no translation was provided.*]

President Obama. I make it a policy not to comment on active cases that are working their way through the justice system, partly because the people here in the United States know that the lawyers work for me and I want to make sure that we appear impartial. I'm not familiar with all the details of the case, so I'll decline to comment on the specifics.

I will make a general statement, that I have had the opportunity to work with President Rousseff on the Open Government initiative that we've been trying to mobilize internationally, and Brazil has been a great partner in that process. That the more we can create accountability and transparency in our government systems, the better off we're going to be.

And that takes work. It takes time. But Brazil has been a strong partner with us in that process, and I hope that both countries can continue to make progress on that front.

President Rousseff. I would like to highlight the fact that Petrobras is indeed one of the major oil-producing and oil-exploring companies in the oil and gas industry. Petrobras has more than 60,000 employees. Some employees working for Petrobras did engage in corruption or acts of corruption; therefore, the investigation, of course, that is going on—has been going on by the federal prosecutor's office, and they're going—they're being sued by that office.

The circumstantial evidence that is available from the prosecutors are pretty substantial; the evidence is pretty substantial, circumstantially. So what I'm trying to say is that all legal measures that may possibly be taken against or about Petrobras will certainly have to take into account that acts of corruption were practiced within Petrobras, yes, but it does not involve a hundred percent of the company and all staff members. So it therefore follows that those who did practice acts of corruption be held accountable and be punished.

The people who actually engaged in these acts of corruption should be punished to then know what will happen in terms of the corporate processes. But the good news is about Petrobras is that it is a strong company, very well managed today, with proper governance, processes, and compliance processes well in place and properly adjusted.

Were that not the case, how can you—or how could you possibly understand that it has come to a production level of 800,000 barrels a day? Furthermore, this year, it was awarded the so-called Oscar of the oil and industry—oil and gas industry by the OTC. The innovation award was granted to Petrobras this year. So Petrobras is a corporation that is at full blast. It is a fully operational company, not the contrary.

Now, as regards your second question, I have never appointed, nor have I dismissed ministers that may have been appointed or dismissed by the press or by the media. That being the case, I will await until all facts and events be properly looked into and disclosed before I come to an assessment. But at least in principle, I think it is important and necessary that all of us have access to the same information.

The Brazilian Government does not have access to the court records. Strangely enough, there was this selective leakage of information supposedly or allegedly stemming from the dockets or the court records. So, apparently, people are free to say whatever they want. And those who are accused have no way of defending themselves because they don't really know exactly what they are being charged with.

We are a country marked by a democratic process. We were able to put an end to all of the arbitrary arrangements and violation of rights of the past. In the case of Brazil, we had the very strong military dictatorship. So given our track record, we should really enshrine the right to defense, and we should stick to the principle of sentencing only when evidence is available, not the other way around.

I mean, people have the right of proving that they are innocent. I mean, only those who accuse are the ones who should provide evidence of guilt. I mean, that's the underlying basic principle of Western civilization that we all share. That's what we talk about when we talk about democracy. I mean people's right to defense, to a fair defense.

And also the burden of proof: The burden of proof lies on the accusing party. And it should be, of course, a grounded type of evidence, not just allegations, speculation that does not ensure access to all of the court records. That would be medieval; it would send us back to the Middle Ages. That's not what we do in Brazil today.

President Obama. Jim, about last week, I had a chance to do the Rose Garden celebration of the Court decision around same-sex marriage. I did not have a chance to comment on how good the White House looked in rainbow colors. [*Laughter*] That made it a really good week. To see people gathered in the evening outside on a beautiful summer night, and to feel whole and to feel accepted and to feel that they had a right to love—that was pretty cool. That was a good thing.

Q. No regrets on—[*inaudible*].

President Obama. That was a good thing. The only bad part about it was, I couldn't go out and peek at it myself because then I would have to clear out all the people—or Secret Service would have. [*Laughter*] So I could only reflect on it from a television screen. That's a moment worth savoring.

Thank you very much, everybody.

Q. Did you discuss Venezuela?

President Obama. We did. [*Laughter*]

Q. What did you discuss?

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 12:11 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to White House Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest. A reporter referred to former National Security Agency contractor Edward J. Snowden, who is accused of leaking classified documents to members of the news media. Another reporter referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist organization. President Rousseff spoke in Portuguese, and her remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Joint Communique by President Obama and President Dilma Rousseff of Brazil

June 30, 2015

Washington, June 30, 2015

At the invitation of President Barack Obama, President Dilma Rousseff made an official working visit to the United States on June 29–30, 2015 to review the main topics of the bilateral, regional and multilateral agendas.

The Presidents highlighted the traditional ties that bind the two countries and underscored their determination to strengthen an increasingly diversified and mature partnership, grounded in mutual respect and trust, shared values, and a focus on meeting the needs and aspirations of the societies of the

two largest democracies and economies in the Americas.

The Leaders also emphasized the important role of the principal mechanisms for bilateral coordination and dialogue—the Global Partnership Dialogue, the Economic and Finance Dialogue, the Strategic Energy Dialogue, and the Defense Cooperation Dialogue.

Expanding Trade and Investment Cooperation

Recognizing the robust bilateral trade and investment between our two countries, the Heads of State committed to enhance efforts to expand trade and investment, as well as to increase the competitiveness and diversity of both our economies. The Leaders stressed that the accelerated growth of the economy of the United States—the chief destination for Brazilian exports of manufactured products—and the strong ties that unite the two countries offer important opportunities for expanding bilateral trade and investment flows.

In keeping with the objective to expand bilateral trade flows, the Presidents underscored recent advances in the areas of trade facilitation and conformity assessment. They praised the recent signing of the Memorandum of Intentions on Trade Facilitation between the U.S. Department of Commerce (DoC) and Brazil's Ministry of Development, Industry and Commerce (MDIC) and reiterated the importance of sharing public-private sector best practices to advance trade. The governments agreed to use videoconference capabilities and in person meetings to exchange lessons learned and best practices, as each country develops and deploys their respective single window systems for international trade. This engagement will be initiated before the end of 2015.

They also expressed their intention to sign the Bilateral Memorandum of Intent (MOI) on Standards and Conformity Assessment in order to provide a more formal framework to support industry-led cooperation on standards and conformity assessment. Furthermore, the Leaders expressed their willingness to expand cooperation in the area of standards and conformity assessment by supporting initiatives that help eliminate obstacles to the growth of trade flows and bilateral investment. The Presidents expressed their satisfaction with the completion of an Agreed Statement on Worksharing between the two national patent offices in order to improve efficiencies in the patent registration process.

The Presidents expressed their satisfaction with the results of the ninth meeting of the U.S.-Brazil CEO Forum, held on June 18 and 19, in Brasilia, Brazil. On June 19, the private sector members of the CEO Forum delivered joint recommendations to the government co-chairs in the areas of Energy; Tax, Trade, and Investment; Aviation; Education and Innovation; Infrastructure; and Healthcare. The Presidents committed their governments to work with the private sector members of the CEO Forum and the business community broadly to consider and respond to the joint recommendations to advance U.S.-Brazil trade and investment ties. In this spirit, the Presidents committed to holding the next meeting of the Joint Commission on Economic and Trade Relations under the Agreement on Trade and Economic Cooperation (ATEC) in the second half of 2015.

The Presidents welcomed the growing partnership between both countries in agriculture. As the two largest food producing countries, the United States and Brazil are partners in feeding the world.

The United States and Brazil committed to working together to seek efficiencies and new technologies to meet the ever-growing demand for safe and sustainable food, and at the same time tackle climate change. As global leaders in the use of innovative agricultural production technologies, both countries share a commitment to science-based decision making.

The United States Department of Agriculture and the Brazilian Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, and Food Supply are committed to working collaboratively to strengthen our already strong relationship. The partnership reflects mutual efforts toward overcoming differences, as well as a continued commitment to reducing barriers to agricultural trade.

Both Presidents, therefore, welcomed the imminent opening of fresh beef trade between

the two countries. President Dilma Rousseff expressed her satisfaction with the publication of the American final rule. Brazil is also taking action to expand U.S. beef access in the near future.

The Presidents emphasized their commitment to expanding investment opportunities in infrastructure projects in both countries. Both leaders welcomed the participation of U.S. and Brazilian firms in modernizing each country's national infrastructure networks, which will promote long-term economic growth. President Dilma Rousseff highlighted the recent launch of the new cycle of concessions for investment in Brazil's infrastructure sector, which creates opportunities for U.S. companies in the $64 billion multi-year program.

The Presidents recognized the importance of trade facilitation and entry into force of the World Trade Organization Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) to increase global economic growth and prosperity. The TFA sets the path to fundamentally reform global customs practices; substantially reduce the costs and time associated with goods crossing borders, including those in transit; promote cooperation and automated border procedures; and improve the transparency and predictability of trade and doing business. The Presidents reaffirmed their support for ratification of the TFA at the WTO Ministerial Meeting in Nairobi, Kenya in December.

The Leaders reiterated both countries' commitment to the Multilateral Trading System. They shared the belief that the time is now for WTO Members to come together on a pathway to conclude the Doha Development Agenda.

The Heads of State reiterated their commitment to implementing reforms in international financial institutions to adequately reflect the increasing economic weight of emerging market and developing economies.

The Heads of State welcomed the renewal of the U.S. Generalized System of Preferences, which will address the Brazilian exporters' interest in preferential access to the US market, while at the same time supporting U.S. jobs, helping to keep American manufacturers competitive, and benefit American families by lowering prices on many consumer goods.

Increasing People to People Ties and Fostering Partnerships through Travel Facilitation, Education, Energy, Science and Technology, and Innovation

The Presidents reviewed the implementation of measures that facilitate the flow of tourists and business executives between the two countries, including the increasing flight frequencies that have resulted from the signing of the March 2011 United States-Brazil Air Transport Agreement. They praised the results achieved by their respective consular offices in reducing the time necessary to process and grant visas.

The Heads of State expressed satisfaction with the decision by the Brazilian government to participate in the "Global Entry" program. They also expressed their commitment to take the necessary steps to implement Brazil's participation in the "Global Entry" program by the end of the first half of 2016.

The Presidents committed to work closely together to meet the requirements of both the United States Visa Waiver Program and Brazil's applicable legislation to enable American and Brazilian citizens visa free travel.

The Presidents welcomed the signing of the Agreement on Social Security, which will allow foreign nationals who work in the each country to have their Social Security contributions in both countries recognized. The Agreement will produce economic gains to companies in both countries, as it helps avoid double contribution to the two Social Security systems. With trade and investment rapidly growing between our two countries, it is estimated that this agreement will save U.S. and Brazilian companies more than $900 million over the first six years.

The Presidents singled out education as a key factor in creating more equitable and prosperous societies and highlighted its strategic role within our bilateral cooperation.

The Leaders recognized that technological innovations and the need for qualified technical professionals require ongoing improvements in career and technical education. They

welcomed the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding for cooperation between the United States and Brazil on career and technical education, which aims to promote increased collaboration among education institutions in both countries.

The Heads of State welcomed the increased academic mobility of students from both countries, encouraged by initiatives such as the 100,000 Strong in the Americas and Brazil Scientific Mobility Program (*Ciência sem Fronteiras*), and reiterated the importance of private sector engagement in these initiatives.

The Presidents praised the exponential rise in academic cooperation through the "Ciência sem Fronteiras" program, which has allowed 32,716 students coming from 596 institutions in every Brazilian region to study in 742 American institutions between 2011 and 2015, and enabled 98 young scientists and 280 researchers from the United States, especially in the areas of engineering and other technological fields, to go to Brazil.

The EducationUSA network throughout Brazil actively supports the Brazil Scientific Mobility Initiative by making it easier for Brazilian students to select the United States as the top destination for program participants. EducationUSA partners with the United States Embassy and Consulates throughout Brazil to support the special visa processing days and pre-departure orientations.

The Presidents recognized the importance of the renewal of the Strategic Energy Dialogue and the decision to organize the third meeting of the Dialogue on October 8–9, 2015 in Washington, D.C. The Leaders endorsed cooperation in the following priority areas: oil and natural gas, biofuels, renewable energy, energy efficiency, civil nuclear energy, and energy-related science. The Presidents underscored the importance of enhancing the levels of clean and renewable energy in their respective energy mixes and improving energy efficiency.

The Heads of State recognized the role that biofuels can play in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. They expressed their commitment to cooperate to further the development of biofuels for aviation. They also agreed that the Dialogue would explore new engagements focused on improving vehicle efficiency and overall energy management. They encouraged greater cooperation with the private sector in the Strategic Energy Dialogue to accelerate the deployment of clean energy technologies, and the exploration—with commercial agencies of both countries—of a potential United States-Brazil Clean Energy Forum to facilitate cooperation and dialogue among government, business, academia, and civil society.

The Presidents expressed their satisfaction with the results achieved at the Fourth Meeting of the United States-Brazil Joint Commission on Science and Technology Cooperation, and welcomed the Committee's agreement to enhance bilateral cooperation in disaster management and response, natural resources management and ecosystems research, clean energy and energy efficiency systems, high-energy physics, synchrotron light sources, biomedicine, health, and innovation, in addition to exploring future collaborative opportunities in information and communication technologies. The Presidents also encouraged further cooperation in formal and informal science, technology, education, and mathematics (STEM) education and promotion.

The Presidents underscored the importance of manufacturing sector competitiveness to their respective economies, and noted the key role of innovation in achieving this objective. They therefore agreed to begin a dialogue on manufacturing innovation and, as a first step, the United States invited Brazil to send a delegation to Youngstown, Ohio to learn from the United States's experience with the National Network for Manufacturing Innovation (NNMI). The Presidents welcome collaboration between the public and private sectors, including those spurred by the Council for Competitiveness and Brazil Partners through the Fourth United States-Brazil Innovation Conference, scheduled for 2016 in California.

The Presidents reaffirmed their interest in enhancing the dialogue on environmental issues to promote sustainable development in both countries. The two sides will strengthen

their cooperation on solutions to forest fires in tropical areas, exchange of successful experiences and information technology for tracking and managing forest fires, as well as scientific and expert training activities.

The two sides decided to advance the implementation of existing arrangements, including the Memorandum of Understanding between the United States Environmental Protection Agency and Brazilian Ministry of Environment, which gives priority to collaboration on the environmentally sensitive development of unconventional oil and gas; methodologies and instruments of environmental impact assessment, licensing, and risk management; socially inclusive management of solid waste and sustainable management of water resources. The two sides acknowledged ongoing partnerships aimed at information sharing and technical training on water quality. They are committed to expanding the technical cooperation agenda on matters related to water security and the impact of climate change on water management.

Strengthening Global, Multilateral, and Regional Cooperation

The Presidents shared their views on international issues of mutual concern and discussed collaborating to respond to global and regional challenges. Recognizing that the Global Partnership Dialogue (GPD) is a key mechanism for the United States and Brazil to share opinions, identify points of agreement, and define strategic priorities for consistent bilateral engagement, the two leaders agreed the next meeting of the Global Partnership Dialogue would take place in the latter half of 2015.

The Presidents decided to initiate a human rights working group under the aegis of the Global Partnership Dialogue. The objective of the Dialogue is to exchange views and intensify efforts to strengthen multilateral human rights institutions. The Presidents also noted the importance of relying on independent, multilateral monitoring mechanisms to ensure the legitimacy and credibility of international efforts to promote and defend human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The Presidents concurred that just as other international organizations have had to change to be more responsive to the challenges of the 21st century, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) also needs to be reformed, and expressed their support for a modest expansion of the Security Council that improves its effectiveness and efficiency, as well as its representativeness. President Obama reaffirmed his appreciation for Brazil's aspiration to become a permanent member of the Security Council and acknowledged its assumption of global responsibilities.

In assessing the outcome of the IX Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, concluded on May 22 in New York, the Heads of State reaffirmed the need for progress toward a world free of nuclear weapons, in peace and security, and reiterated their Governments' strong determination to support practical international efforts on disarmament, non-proliferation, and cooperation for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. They expressed support for the entry into force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty as soon as possible.

They decided to intensify their multilateral cooperation in the fields of nuclear disarmament verification, physical protection, nuclear security, and in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

The United States and Brazil share the understanding that global Internet governance must be transparent and inclusive, ensuring full participation of governments, civil society, private sector and international organizations, so that the potential of the Internet as a powerful tool for economic and social development can be fulfilled.

Both countries acknowledge the agenda approved by Netmundial conference (São Paulo, April 2014) as a guide for discussions regarding the future of the global internet governance system.

Both countries reaffirm their adherence to the multistakeholder model of Internet governance and, in this context, reaffirm their

commitment to cooperate for the success of the Tenth Internet Governance Forum (João Pessoa, November 10 to 13, 2015), and extension of the IGF mandate.

Likewise, they reaffirm their interest in participating actively in the preparatory process of the High-Level Meeting of the UN General Assembly for the Ten-Year Review of the WSIS outcomes, to be held in New York in December 2015.

Bilateral cooperation on cyber issues will be resumed by the convening of the Second Meeting of the Working Group on Internet and Information and Communications Technology in Brasilia in the second semester. The meeting will offer the opportunity of exchanging experiences and exploring possibilities for cooperation in a number of key areas, including e-government, the digital economy, cybersecurity, cybercrime prevention, capacity building activities, international security in cyberspace, and research, development, and innovation.

The Presidents also praised the fruitful bilateral cooperation in the organization of major sporting events under the Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation to Support Major Global and Sporting Events, signed on the occasion of the visit of the U.S. president to Brazil in 2011.

President Barack Obama congratulated President Dilma Rousseff on Brazil's successful 2014 World Cup and on the first World Games of Indigenous Peoples, in Palmas, in the state of Tocantins in 2015. President Obama thanked President Rousseff for her kind invitation to attend the opening ceremonies of the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro.

The Presidents underscored their joint commitment to deepening economic engagement with Africa at a pivotal time in the continent's development. They renewed their commitment to working cooperatively, including through multilateral institutions, to support progress toward Africa's prosperity, peace and security, and commitment to democracy and good governance.

The Presidents highlighted the successful outcomes achieved in joint projects for development in Latin America, the Caribbean, and especially Africa, and expressed their intention to expand initiatives in food security, agriculture, health, energy, public safety, dignified work, and humanitarian assistance. They agreed to continue nutrition and food security projects in Honduras, Mozambique, and Haiti, and to expand ongoing cooperation in Mozambique.

The Presidents recognized the importance of the Organization of American States in defending and promoting democratic governance and human rights. They congratulated Luis Almagro, the new secretary general, and committed to working with him to revitalize the organization to more effectively help member states meet hemispheric challenges, and as a partner in helping member states deliver improvements in the lives of their citizens.

In an increasingly complex world, with major challenges to international security, the Presidents noted with satisfaction that the Americas stand out as a region where democracy, peace, and cooperation prevail. President Rousseff praised President Obama's policy changes towards Cuba, and the Leaders agreed that the latest Summit of the Americas (held in Panama, on April 10 and 11, 2015) demonstrated the region's capacity to overcome the differences of the past through dialogue, thereby paving the way for the region as a whole to find solutions to the common challenges facing the countries of the Americas. The Presidents recognized the efforts of Brazil and the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) to promote political dialogue in Venezuela and the holding of credible, transparent and internationally monitored legislative elections in December.

With regard to Syria, the Presidents agreed that only a negotiated and inclusive political solution can end the suffering of the Syrian people and allow them to fulfill their legitimate aspirations.

The Presidents reiterated the need to resolve the Israel-Palestinian conflict on the basis of a just, lasting, and comprehensive peace

agreement that results in an independent, contiguous Palestinian state coexisting in peace and security alongside Israel. They reaffirmed the urgent need for the parties to demonstrate—through actions and policies—genuine advancement of a two-state solution.

The Presidents condemned terrorism in the strongest terms, while sharing the view that countering violent extremism that fuels this scourge requires a comprehensive approach to address communities that may be at risk of radicalization and recruitment by terrorist groups. Noting the ongoing violence in Iraq and Syria as well as recent attacks by terrorists in Tunisia, France, Kuwait, and yesterday in Egypt, the Presidents agreed that violent extremism can take many forms and often targets some of the world's most vulnerable populations. Leaders in every nation must work together to implement comprehensive approaches and to prevent violent extremist ideologies from taking hold.

Strengthening Defense and Security Cooperation

The Presidents welcomed the entry into force of the Defense Cooperation Agreement, which provides an institutional framework for defense cooperation, as well as that of the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA), which will allow for a greater flow of information, goods, services, and technologies to advance the security of both countries. Collectively, these two agreements will deepen our defense relationship.

The Presidents also welcomed the results achieved on the occasion of the first meeting of the Defense Cooperation Dialogue (DCD) in 2012, when new opportunities for bilateral and global defense cooperation were identified, and decided the DCD and Political-Military Talks should be re-established.

The Presidents underscored the importance of the growing engagement between the private sectors of their countries in joint projects in the defense sector, an extension of the countries' long-term interest in strengthening relations in strategic sectors.

Expressing their great concern with the global drug problem, the Presidents stressed the priority given to the effort in fighting this scourge with an emphasis on public health and respect for human rights. As such, they decided to expand the exchange of national experiences, particularly those aimed at reducing drug use and providing treatment and social rehabilitation for addicts.

The Leaders decided to explore bilateral or trilateral initiatives to combat transnational crimes, including through the Working Group on Security and Transnational Crimes.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint communique.

Joint Statement by President Obama and President Dilma Rousseff of Brazil on Climate Change

June 30, 2015

Presidents Barack Obama and Dilma Rousseff commit to intensify collaboration between the United States and Brazil, both bilaterally and under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), as our countries work to address the challenges posed by climate change. The global scientific community has made clear that human activity is already changing the world's climate system, causing serious impacts, putting ever larger numbers of people at risk, posing challenges to sustainable development, affecting particularly the poor and most vulnerable, and harming economies and societies around the world, including in the United States and Brazil.

Leading Together Towards Paris

The two Presidents reiterated their call for a successful outcome later this year at the Paris Climate Change Conference. The Paris outcome should send a strong signal to the international community that governments, businesses

and civil society are decisively taking on the climate challenge.

The Presidents expressed their commitment to work with each other and with other partners to resolve potential obstacles towards an ambitious and balanced Paris Agreement. Mindful of the long-term goal of limiting global temperature increase to a maximum of 2°C above preindustrial levels, they agreed that there should be strong nationally determined contributions, regular updating by Parties in order to promote greater ambition over time, and encouragement of longer-term strategies for transitioning to low-carbon economies. There should also be strong and credible transparency, including reporting and review, as well as periodic stocktaking of its overall effectiveness. The Presidents are committed to reaching an ambitious agreement that reflects the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, in light of different national circumstances.

The Presidents recognize the social and economic value of mitigation actions and their cobenefits to adaptation, health and sustainable development. The Presidents pledged to work together toward mobilizing public funding and developing financial instruments to catalyze large-scale private investments to support low carbon development projects and countries' transitions to low-carbon economies. Further, the Presidents affirmed the need for continued, robust financial support to help realize developing countries' mitigation potential and to enhance their adaptation actions.

Taking Ambitious Climate Action

The Presidents underscored the benefits of early mitigation actions for limiting global temperature increase. They noted that both countries have been actively and productively engaged in recent years in a range of activities that have reduced greenhouse gas emissions. President Rousseff welcomed the ambitious national mitigation policies and measures of the United States and its constructive engagement in multilateral climate change negotiations. President Obama commended Brazil for its very strong mitigation results, principally through a significant curbing of deforestation in the Amazon region.

The Presidents highlighted the fact that, since 2005, Brazil and the United States have reduced greenhouse gas emissions in absolute terms more than any other countries in the world. Brazil has reduced its emissions by around 41% as compared to 2005, while the United States has reduced its emissions by around 10% and is on track to meet its 2020 target. In the run-up to the UN Climate Conference in Paris, both countries are respectively putting forward strong post-2020 contributions consistent with their determination to show global leadership.

Per its submission to the UNFCCC, the United States intends to achieve an economy-wide target of reducing its emissions by 26%–28% below 2005 levels in 2025 and to make best efforts to reduce its emissions by 28%. Brazil will present a fair and ambitious intended nationally determined contribution that represents its highest possible effort beyond its current actions. It will be based on the implementation of broad policies, including those in the forestry, land-use, industrial, and energy sectors. Brazil will pursue policies aimed at eliminating illegal deforestation, coupled with ambitious enhancement of carbon stocks through reforestation and forest restoration. For that purpose, Brazil intends to restore and reforest 12 million hectares of forests by 2030. In line with its goal to expand the use of renewable energy sources, Brazil intends that its total energy matrix reach, by 2030, a share of 28% to 33% from renewable sources (electricity and biofuels) other than hydropower. Brazil also intends to improve low-carbon agricultural and grazing land practices through the promotion of sustainable agriculture and productivity enhancement; to promote new, clean technology standards for industry; to further promote energy efficiency measures and to expand the use of non–fossil fuel energy sources domestically.

Recognizing the need to accelerate the deployment of renewable energy to help power our economies, the United States and Brazil each intend to increase the share of

renewables—beyond hydropower—in their respective electricity generation mixes to the level of 20% by 2030.

The Presidents, recognizing the importance of managing hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), agreed to work multilaterally in the Montreal Protocol to consider promptly amendment proposals to phase down HFCs.

Brazil-United States Joint Initiative on Climate Change

The two Presidents decide to launch a Joint Initiative on Climate Change, which will be implemented through a new high-level United States-Brazil Climate Change Working Group (CCWG) aimed at enhancing bilateral cooperation on issues relating to land use, clean energy, and adaptation, as well as policy dialogues on domestic and international climate issues.

The Working Group will begin its work by October 2015. During its first meeting, the CCWG will discuss a work program to address areas of action for cooperation. The Climate Change Working Group will be a platform to manage some or all of the following initiatives, as well as others that might be developed over time.

Cooperation on Sustainable Land Use

As part of the new CCWG, the United States and Brazil will promote actions on forests, agriculture, and land use to contribute to climate change mitigation and resilience as well as enhance economic growth. Both countries are leaders in forest conservation and agricultural innovation and have implemented land sector programs designed to enhance mitigation and increase adaptation capacity. Brazil and the United States commit to new and improved management of their forests, croplands and grasslands to increase resilience in forests and agricultural systems, safeguard the multiple services they provide, and share this expertise with other countries. Brazil and the United States will take the following actions, among others:

- Enhancing progress on reducing forest degradation and preventing deforestation, including improvements in the productivity of agricultural and grazing lands;
- Launching a Binational Program on Forest and Land Sector Investment to improve the conditions for attracting investments in sustainable forest management and forest restoration, encouraging the provision of ecosystem services, building resilience, mitigating climate change, and contributing to improved income streams for farmers. This would include convening a public-private Forum on Innovative Forest Investment and launching a Binational Expert Group of government agencies to improve the conditions for forest investment in both countries. These initiatives will identify and help design appropriate financial and risk-mitigation mechanisms that aim to spur private sector funding for forest restoration;
- Establishing technology partnerships for basic and applied research on native species to promote the acceleration of forest restoration projects;
- Deeper cooperation on monitoring, reporting, and verification of forest emissions and forest carbon stocks;
- Continuing identification and establishment of low-carbon agricultural practices for promotion of sustainable agriculture and productivity enhancements for the sector;
- Reinvigorating the work of the Global Research Alliance (GRA) for Agricultural Greenhouse Gases;
- Building on collaborative efforts to enhance scientific research to address areas that help farmers, in our countries and globally, adapt to and mitigate climate change impacts;
- Signing a Declaration of Intentions between the U.S. Forest Service and Brazilian Ministry of Environment on solutions to uncontrolled burning in tropical areas,

information technology for tracking and managing fire, and training managers, scientists, and technologists; and

- Pursuing opportunities to coordinate technical assistance in priority countries and regions on reforestation, forest monitoring, bioenergy production and low-carbon agriculture. Priority areas include the Congo basin, Amazon basin, and Caribbean island States, where applicable.

Cooperation on Clean Energy

The United States and Brazil will strengthen bilateral cooperation mechanisms for energy, including the Strategic Energy Dialogue, which will hold a minister-level session promptly and another meeting on October 8–9 2015.

- *Renewable Energy:* Taking advantage of the abundant renewable resources in both countries, we will expand research on energy supply from renewable energy sources, such as wind, solar, biomass, and renewable transportation fuels.
- *Energy Efficiency and Storage:* Deepening existing cooperation, we will support smart grid initiatives, the use of energy efficient building materials and improve industrial energy efficiency, including through increased adoption of energy management and efficient energy storage systems, including batteries.
- *Basic Energy Research:* Exchanging experiences related to research, development and innovation, and fostering cooperation among universities and research institutions in both countries through the U.S. Energy Frontier Research Centers and Brazil's Scientific Mobility Program.
- *Nuclear Power Generation:* Benefiting from the shared successful experiences of both countries, Brazil and the United States will cooperate on safe and sustainable nuclear power generation and technologies.
- *Catalyzing Finance:* Aiming to spur investment, the United States and Brazil will seek to jointly pilot innovative finance instruments in Brazil designed to mobilize new investments in renewable energy, energy efficiency, and/or resiliency efforts.

Cooperation on Adaptation to Climate Change

Acknowledging the need to manage and reduce risks associated with climate change impacts, such as drought and extreme weather events, as well as the emerging opportunities associated with managing and reducing these risks, the United States and Brazil will work together, including through sharing experiences related to national adaptation planning, to build resilience to climate change impacts in areas such as biodiversity and ecosystems; infrastructure, including energy; agricultural production and food security; and water resources.

The United States and Brazil will continue collaboration on atmospheric and ecosystem science research, building on the Green Ocean Amazon 2014/2015 experiment through post-doctoral educational exchanges between Brazilian and U.S. universities and laboratories.

The United States and Brazil will cooperate on managing issues at the nexus of water and energy, in the context of climate change. As our countries face prolonged and increasingly intense droughts, we need to appropriately integrate energy-water planning and decision-making; collaborate on sustainable hydropower; improve resilient thermoelectric generation resilience; and increase the efficiency of water and wastewater treatment infrastructure systems.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Remarks at a "Let's Move!" Initiative Girl Scout Campout on the South Lawn
June 30, 2015

The President. How's it going? What are you guys doing in my yard? [*Laughter*] When did you guys show up here? [*Laughter*] You just came an hour ago? How's it going? Who are you? Your name's Cathy?

Girl Scout. Hi, Obama.

The President. Hey, you.

So what's been going on? What have you guys been up to?

Girl Scouts. Singing camp songs!

Girl Scouts. Rock climbing!

The President. You're singing camp songs?

Girl Scouts. Yes!

The President. I don't——

The First Lady. Is that all you've been doing is singing? And why are you all dusty? [*Laughter*] What game were you all playing? [*Laughter*]

The President. So you've been singing, but what were you doing before you were singing?

Girl Scouts. Eating dinner.

Girl Scouts. Rock climbing.

The President. You guys had dinner. I'll bet it was delicious.

Girl Scouts. Yes.

The President. You did some rock climbing?

Girl Scouts. Yes!

The President. Where did you go rock climbing? [*Laughter*] There are no rocks over there. What are you talking about? [*Laughter*]

Girl Scout. I made it to the top twice.

The President. Did you? Twice?

The First Lady. I saw it. I was there.

The President. You saw it? You can vouch for it? So you guys been having fun?

Girl Scouts. Yes!

The President. So the—most of you guys are going into fifth grade or sixth grade?

Girl Scouts. Fifth.

The President. Going into fifth. The—and so you guys are from a bunch of different troops, or——

Girl Scouts. Yes.

The President. Okay, from all over the country?

Girl Scouts. Yes.

The President. Wow. So you guys are making new friends.

Girl Scouts. Yes.

The President. Well, that's so much—that's terrific.

The First Lady. Look at their cool little chairs.

The President. They're very nice chairs.

Girl Scout. They roll back. [*Laughter*] Do we get to bring them home?

The President. Can I just say that, like, when I went camping, my tents weren't as nice. [*Laughter*] And I didn't have cool chairs like this. [*Laughter*] So you guys——

Girl Scout. Are these your chairs?

The President. Huh?

Girl Scout. Are these your chairs?

The President. No.

Girl Scout. [*Inaudible*]

The President. I don't know.

The First Lady. Did we give you these chairs?

The President. They just showed up. [*Laughter*] I don't know what you guys are doing here. [*Laughter*]

Girl Scout. We're camping on your lawn. [*Laughter*]

The President. You're camping on my lawn. I don't know how that happened.

Girl Scout. We're making history.

The First Lady. She says, "We're making history."

The President. You're making history. Well, actually, I think the reason that you guys are here is because we're celebrating the great outdoors

Girl Scouts. Yes.

The President. And the National Park Service is trying to make sure that young people get outside, so you guys aren't watching TV all the time or playing video games all the time, but you're getting outside, getting some fresh air, and spending time with your friends and having adventures. And there are national parks all across the country, and it turns out that the White House is a national park.

The First Lady. Yes!

The President. Who knew? I didn't know that. Did I know that? I did?

The First Lady. They knew.

The President. You guys knew.

Girl Scouts. Yes.

The President. Okay. So you guys are helping to celebrate and kick off this whole Great Outdoors adventure that everybody is having—going to be having this summer, right?

Girl Scouts. Yes!

The President. All right. So I don't really know any campfire songs. Are you guys going to teach me one?

Girl Scouts. Yes!

The President. Cathy, do you have a song?

[*At this point, Girl Scouts lifetime member Teresa Suber made brief remarks. The Girl Scouts then sang a song, and the President and First Lady sang along.*]

The President. Fantastic. That was outstanding. There's real talent here. You guys sounded pretty good. Had you practiced before?

Girl Scouts. No.

Girl Scout. We could go on "America's Got Talent."

The President. You could go on "America's Got Talent." No doubt about it. What's next?

[*Ms. Suber made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

Ms. Suber. You are all sisters. You're our sister too, Mr. President.

The President. I'm a brother. I'm a brother.

Ms. Suber. You're a brother.

The President. Hold on a second. Time out. I'm a brother.

Ms. Suber. Yes, but you're very in touch with your feminine side.

The President. Yes. Clearly.

Ms. Suber. That's what makes you so wonderful.

[*Ms. Suber made additional remarks, and the Girl Scouts sang another song.*]

The President. Yay! That was outstanding. Did you guys see the First Lady? Did you see the First Lady rocking out a little bit? [*Laughter*] She had some moves. Yes!

All right, well, this is a—you know what, you guys are having so much fun. Unfortunately, I've got to go to work.

Girl Scouts. No!

The President. I am not allowed to have fun. [*Laughter*]

Girl Scout. Can we have a hug?

Girl Scout. Can we hug?

The President. We can have a group hug.

[*The Girl Scouts ran to the President for a hug.*]

Those are some good hugs! I didn't know that Girl Scouts gave such good hugs. [*Laughter*] Who are those Girl Scouts over there?

[*The President pointed to the troop leaders.*]

They look at least like they're juniors. [*Laughter*]

Well, it's good to see you guys. I'm so glad you guys are having fun. All right? But I want to make sure—you guys better clean up this mess. [*Laughter*] When I come—when I wake up in the morning——

The First Lady. They're—they'll still be here.

The President. I'm teasing. You guys will still be here. I'm teasing, I'm teasing. But you guys aren't going to be making a racket, are you?

Girl Scouts. No!

Girl Scouts. Yes!

The President. Did I hear a "yes"?

Girl Scout. Obama, where's your daughters?

The President. Maybe? All right. It was good to see you guys. All right, have fun.

[*The President greeted troop leaders*.]

The President. Remember to put out the fire before you go to bed. That's what Smokey the Bear says.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:35 p.m.

Letter to President Raúl Castro Ruz of Cuba on the Reestablishment of Diplomatic Relations and Permanent Diplomatic Missions by the United States and Cuba

June 30, 2015

His Excellency Raul Castro Ruz
President of the Council of State and the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Cuba
Havana

Dear Mr. President:

I am pleased to confirm, following high-level discussions between our two governments, and in accordance with international law and practice, that the United States of America and the Republic of Cuba have decided to reestablish diplomatic relations and permanent diplomatic missions in our respective countries on July 20, 2015. This is an important step forward in the process of normalizing relations between our two countries and peoples that we initiated last December.

In making this decision, the United States is encouraged by the reciprocal intention to develop respectful and cooperative relations between our two peoples and governments consistent with the Purposes and Principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, including those related to sovereign equality of States, settlement of international disputes by peaceful means, respect for the territorial integrity and political independence of States, respect for equal rights and self-determination of peoples, non-interference in the internal affairs of States, and promotion and encouragement of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all.

The United States and Cuba are each parties to the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, signed at Vienna on April 18, 1961, and the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, signed at Vienna on April 24, 1963. I am pleased to confirm the understanding of the United States that these agreements will apply to diplomatic and consular relations between our two countries.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
June 30, 2015.

NOTE: This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 1. The Office of the Press Secretary also released English and Spanish versions of a letter from President Castro to President Obama on the reestablishment of diplomatic relations and permanent diplomatic missions in the U.S. and Cuba.

Appendix A—Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this book.

January 1

In the morning, the President, Mrs. Obama, and their daughters Malia and Sasha traveled to Hanauma Bay, HI.

In the afternoon, the President, Mrs. Obama, and their daughters Malia and Sasha traveled to Kailua, HI, where, at Island Snow, they purchased shave ice and greeted customers and staff. Later, they returned to their vacation residence.

In the evening, the President and Mrs. Obama traveled to Honolulu, HI. Later, they returned to their vacation residence in Kailua.

Also in the evening, the President had a telephone conversation with Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo to extend his and the First Lady's condolences on the death of the Governor's father, former Gov. Mario M. Cuomo of New York.

January 2

In the morning, the President traveled to Marine Corps Base Hawaii in Kaneohe Bay, HI. Then, he returned to his vacation residence in Kailua, HI. Later, he traveled to Marine Corps Base Hawaii in Kaneohe Bay.

Also in the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with Senate Majority Leader Harry M. Reid to wish him a full and speedy recovery from injuries sustained while exercising.

In the afternoon, the President returned to his vacation residence in Kailua.

In the evening, the President, Mrs. Obama, and their daughters Malia and Sasha traveled to Honolulu, HI. Later, they returned to their vacation residence in Kailua.

The White House announced that the President, Mrs. Obama, and their daughters Malia and Sasha will return to Washington, DC, on January 3.

January 3

In the morning, the President traveled to Bellows Air Force Station in Waimanalo, HI.

In the afternoon, the President returned to his vacation residence in Kailua, HI. Later, he and his daughters Malia and Sasha traveled to the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Honolulu. Then, they stopped to visit the President's sister Maya Soetoro-Ng at her home. Later, they traveled to Kailua, where they visited with musician Eddie Vedder and his family at their home. Then, they returned to their vacation residence.

In the evening, the President, Mrs. Obama, and their daughters Malia and Sasha returned to Washington, DC, arriving the following morning.

January 5

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President and Vice President Biden had lunch. Later, in the Roosevelt Room, he met with his senior advisers.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with President Giorgio Napolitano of Italy to thank him for his leadership and commitment to Italy-U.S. relations, commend him for his dedication to the European Union and U.S.–EU cooperation, and discuss the economic situation in Europe. He also had a telephone conversation with President Beji Caid Essebsi of Tunisia to congratulate him on his election victory under Tunisia's new Constitution, commend Tunisians for their transition to democracy, reiterate U.S. commitment to assist Tunisian efforts to strengthen national security and increase economic opportunity, and invite President Caid Essebsi to the White House.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Wayne, MI, on January 7.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Phoenix, AZ, on January 7.

January 6

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Cabinet Room, the President had a working lunch with President Enrique Peña Nieto of Mexico. Later, in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Joe Biden met with Secretary of Defense Charles T. Hagel.

The White House announced that the President, Vice President Joe Biden, and his wife Jill T. Biden will travel to Knoxville, TN, and Clinton, TN, on January 9.

The President announced his intention to nominate Allan R. Landon to be a Governor on the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System.

January 7

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. He also received a briefing on the terrorist attack carried out by two gunmen against the Charlie Hebdo newspaper staff in Paris, France.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Wayne, MI. While en route aboard Air Force One, he had a telephone conversation with President François Hollande of France to offer his condolences for the loss of life, express solidarity with the French people, and offer assistance in the aftermath of the terrorist attack in Paris.

Upon arrival in Wayne, the President toured the Ford Motor Co. Michigan Assembly Plant with Executive Chairman William C. Ford, Jr., Chief Executive Officer Mark Fields, Plant Manager Phillip Calhoun, and employee Mia Dew. He also greeted plant employee and U.S. military veteran Ramone Davis, who served in Iraq and Afghanistan. Later, he traveled to Phoenix, AZ, arriving in the evening.

In the evening, upon arrival in Phoenix, the President traveled to Pointe Hilton Squaw Peak Resort, where he remained overnight.

The White House announced that the President will welcome the 2014 National Basketball Association Champion San Antonio Spurs to the White House on January 12.

The President declared a major disaster in Mississippi and ordered Federal aid to supplement State, tribal, and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms and tornadoes on December 23, 2014.

January 8

In the morning, the President traveled to Nueva Villas at Beverly, a single-family housing development owned by the local nonprofit Chicanos Por La Causa, Inc., where he greeted residents. Then, he traveled to Central High School, where he met with former Rep. Gabrielle D. Giffords and her husband Mark E. Kelly to commemorate the fourth anniversary of the shooting in Tucson, AZ, in which former Rep. Giffords was wounded.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC. While en route aboard Air Force One, he had a telephone conversation with Sen. Barbara L. Boxer to discuss her decision not to seek reelection and thank her for her service. Then, also aboard Air Force One, he had a teleconference call with his national security team to receive a briefing on terror threats and an update on the ongoing investigation into the terrorist attack against the Charlie Hebdo newspaper staff in Paris, France.

In the evening, at the French Embassy, the President signed a condolence book for the victims of the attack in Paris and observed a moment of silence with France's Ambassador to the U.S. Gerard Araud.

The President announced his intention to nominate Patricia D. Cahill to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

The President announced his intention to nominate Walter Hood and Diane H. Rodriguez to be members of the National Council on the Arts.

The President announced his intention to nominate Kristen M. Kulinowski to be a member of the Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board.

The President announced his intention to nominate Kristen J. Sarri to be Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management, and Budget at the Department of the Interior.

The President announced his intention to appoint Brian E. Argrett as a member of the Community Development Advisory Board.

The President announced his intention to appoint Barbara B. Franklin and Edward F. Hartfield as members of the Federal Service Impasses Panel at the Federal Labor Relations Authority.

The President announced his intention to appoint William H. Leary as a member of the Public Interest Declassification Board.

January 9

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing, which included an update on the ongoing investigation into the terrorist attack against the Charlie Hebdo newspaper staff in Paris, France. Later, he traveled to Knoxville, TN, arriving in the afternoon. While en route aboard Air Force One, he met with Sens. A. Lamar Alexander, Jr., and Robert P. Corker, Jr., Rep. John J. Duncan, Jr., Under Secretary of Education Theodore Mitchell, and Deputy Director of the Domestic Policy Council James Kvaal.

In the afternoon, the President and Vice President Joe Biden traveled to Clinton, TN, where they toured the Techmer PM, LLC, production facility with Chairman and Chief Executive Officer John R. Manuck. Later, he returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the evening.

During the day, the President was briefed by Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Lisa O. Monaco on the ongoing investigation into the terrorist attack in Paris.

The President announced his intention to appoint David S. Cohen as Deputy Director of the Central Intelligence Agency.

The President announced his intention to appoint John H. Hankinson as Federal Representative of the U.S. to the Sabine River Compact Administration.

January 10

The White House announced that the President will welcome Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom to the White House on January 15 and 16.

January 12

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel to discuss the status of P5-plus-1 negotiations aimed at preventing Iran's acquisition of a nuclear weapon and underscore U.S. commitment to Israel's security.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Cedar Falls, IA, on January 14.

January 13

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had lunch. Then, he traveled to Arlington, VA. Later, he returned to Washington, DC.

In the evening, the President had a telephone conversation with Head Coach Urban Meyer of the Ohio State University football team to congratulate him on his team's victory in the 2014 College Football Playoff National Championship.

The President announced the designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to attend the Inauguration of Juan Evo Morales Ayma as President of Bolivia in La Paz, Bolivia, on January 21: Tomasz P. Malinowski (head of delegation); Peter M. Brennan; and Alejandra Y. Castillo.

January 14

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organization (AFL–CIO) President Richard L. Trumka and United

Auto Workers (UAW) President Dennis D. Williams. Later, he traveled to Cedar Falls, IA.

Later in the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the evening.

January 15

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had a telephone conversation with Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany to discuss international financial assistance for Ukraine and the situation in eastern Ukraine.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office the President signed a memorandum on modernizing Federal leave policies for childbirth, adoption, and foster care. Then, he traveled to Baltimore, MD. Later, he traveled to the Hilton Baltimore hotel, where he attended the Senate Democratic Issues Conference. Then, he returned to Washington, DC.

In the evening, in the Blue Room, the President had a working dinner with Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom.

January 16

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Later, also in the Oval Office, they met with Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom.

In the afternoon, in the Family Theater, the President hosted a screening of the film "Selma" for members of the cast and crew.

January 17

The President announced the designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to attend the commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp in Oswiecim, Poland, on January 27:

Jacob J. Lew (head of delegation);
Stephen D. Mull;
Crystal Nix-Hines;
David N. Saperstein;
Charles A. Kupchan;
Nicholas Dean;
Aviva Sufian;
Israel Arbeiter;
Irene Weiss; and
David Harris.

January 18

The White House announced that the President will travel to Boise, ID, on January 21.

January 19

In the afternoon, at the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Washington, the President, Mrs. Obama, and their daughter Malia participated in a service project to promote voluntarism on Martin Luther King, Jr., Day. White House Senior Adviser Valerie B. Jarrett, Cabinet Secretary Broderick D. Johnson, and Corporation for National and Community Service Chief Executive Officer Wendy Spencer also attended.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Lawrence, KS, on January 21.

January 20

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Denver, CO, resident Carolyn Reed, St. Anthony, MN, resident Rebekah Erler, Butler, MO, resident Victor L. Fugate, Jr., and Woodland Hills, CA, resident Katrice Mubiru, who had written letters to the President and will join Mrs. Obama and Jill T. Biden, wife of Vice President Joe Biden, as guests at the State of the Union Address.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with President François Hollande of France to discuss the ongoing investigations into the January 7–8 terrorist attacks in Paris, the situation in eastern Ukraine, continued international sanctions against Russia, efforts to support elections in Nigeria and counter Boko Haram terrorist organization, ongoing negotiations to prevent Iran's acquisition of a nuclear weapon, and recent developments in Israeli-Palestinian relations.

January 21

In the morning, the President traveled to Boise, ID, arriving in the afternoon. While en route aboard Air Force One, he had a telephone conversation with President Nursultan

Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan to discuss the situation in eastern Ukraine and Kazakhstan-U.S. relations.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Boise State University, where he toured the facilities of the New Product Development Lab with College of Engineering Dean Amy J. Moll. Then, he met with Naghmeh Abedini, wife of Saeed Abedini, a U.S. pastor imprisoned by the Iranian Government, and their children Jacob and Rebekka. Later, he traveled to Topeka, KS, arriving in the evening.

In the evening, upon arrival in Topeka, the President traveled to the Holiday Inn in Lawrence, KS, where he remained overnight.

January 22

In the morning, the President traveled to the Community Children's Center, where he toured a classroom and visited with teachers, staff, and students. Then, he traveled to the Anschutz Sports Pavilion at the University of Kansas, where he met with Bill Self, head coach of the men's basketball team, and team members.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Topeka, KS, where, prior to departure from Forbes Field Air National Guard Base, he visited with Lt. Col. Douglas Pratt, USAF, a retiring Chief Presidential Flight Support officer, and his children Brennan and Lindsay. Then, he returned to Washington, DC.

Later in the afternoon, in the East Room, the President participated in separate live interviews with YouTube hosts Hank Green, GloZell Green, and Bethany Mota.

During the day, the President received regular updates on the situation in Yemen and the security of U.S. Embassy and civilian staff there.

The President announced his intention to nominate Stan Meiburg to be Deputy Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency.

The President announced his intention to nominate Stuart F. Delery to be Associate Attorney General.

The President announced his intention to nominate Richard T. Julius to be a member of the Internal Revenue Service Oversight Board.

The President announced his intention to appoint Joseph P. Riley, Jr., as a member of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation.

The President announced his intention to appoint Tiffany Dena Loftin as a member of the President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for African Americans.

The President announced his intention to appoint Jim W. Balsiger as a U.S. Commissioner on the International Pacific Halibut Commission.

The President announced his intention to appoint Gordon W. "Jeff" Fassett as the Federal Commissioner on the Red River Compact Commission.

The President announced his intention to appoint Mark Scarano as an Alternate Federal Cochairperson of the Northern Border Regional Commission.

January 23

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

January 24

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Mrs. Obama traveled to Ramstein Air Base, Germany, arriving in the evening. While en route aboard Air Force One, he had a telephone conversation with King Salman bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia to express his condolences for the death of King Abdallah bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud and discuss his plan to travel to Saudi Arabia on January 27.

In the evening, the President and Mrs. Obama traveled to New Delhi, India, arriving the following morning.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on January 27.

The President announced the designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to attend the Inauguration of Edgar Lungu as President of Zambia in Lusaka, Zambia, on January 25: Sarah Sewall (head the delegation); Eric T. Schultz; and Deborah L. Birx.

January 25

In the afternoon, the President traveled to the Rashtrapati Bhavan Presidential palace, where he participated in an official arrival ceremony with President Pranab Mukherjee of India. Then, he traveled to the Raj Ghat memorial to Mahatma Gandhi, where he participated in a wreath-laying ceremony and tree planting. Later, he traveled to the Hyderabad House, where he and Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India had a working lunch.

Later in the afternoon, also at the Hyderabad House, the President and Prime Minister Modi participated in a walk-and-talk and had tea. Then, also at the Hyderabad House, they had an expanded bilateral meeting. Later, he traveled to the ITC Maurya, New Delhi hotel.

In the evening, at the ITC Maurya, New Delhi hotel, the President and Mrs. Obama met with U.S. Embassy personnel and their families. Then, they traveled to the Rashtrapati Bhavan Presidential palace, where they viewed a cultural performance. Later, they returned to the ITC Maurya, New Delhi hotel, where they remained overnight.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan to offer his condolences for the murder of Japanese citizen Haruna Yukawa by members of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization in Syria, convey his appreciation for Japan's contributions of humanitarian assistance to the Middle East region, and discuss Japan-U.S. relations.

January 26

In the morning, the President and Mrs. Obama traveled to Rajpath Saluting Base, where they viewed a parade in commemoration of India's Republic Day. Also in the morning, he received a briefing on the winter storm heading into the Mid-Atlantic region of the U.S.

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Obama returned to the ITC Maurya, New Delhi hotel. Later, at the hotel, he met with Congress Party leaders.

Later in the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Obama traveled to the Rashtrapati Bhavan Presidential palace, where, in the Mughal Gardens, they attended a reception hosted by President Pranab Mukherjee of India. Later, they returned to the ITC Maurya, New Delhi hotel. Later, he traveled to the Taj Palace, New Delhi hotel, where he participated in a roundtable discussion with chief executive officers of Indian and U.S. businesses and government leaders.

In the evening, the President returned to the ITC Maurya, New Delhi hotel.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Philadelphia, PA, to attend the House Democratic Caucus Retreat on January 29.

January 27

In the morning, the President traveled to the Siri Fort Auditorium, where he met with 2014 Nobel Peace Prize winner Kailash Satyarthi, children's rights advocate and founder of Bachpan Bachao Andolan, and other social justice advocates. Later, he and Mrs. Obama returned to the ITC Maurya, New Delhi hotel, arriving in the afternoon.

In the afternoon, the President recorded an interview with Fareed Zakaria of CNN's "Fareed Zakaria GPS" program for later broadcast. Later, he and Mrs. Obama traveled to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, where they were greeted at Riyadh King Khalid International Airport by King Salman bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia and other Saudi officials.

Later in the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Obama traveled to the Erga Palace in Wadi Hanifa, where they had dinner with King Salman bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia.

In the evening, the President and Mrs. Obama traveled to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, where they were greeted at Riyadh King Khalid International Airport by Crown Prince Muqrin bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud, Deputy Crown Prince Muhammad bin Nayif bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud, and Governor of Riyadh Province Turki bin Abdallah Al Saud of Saudi Arabia. Then, they traveled to Ramstein Air Base, Germany.

Later in the evening, the President and Mrs. Obama returned to Washington, DC, arriving the following morning.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany to discuss the situation in eastern Ukraine, Russia's support for the separatists and failure to fulfill its commitment under the Minsk agreement, and the importance of continued international financial assistance for Ukraine.

The President announced the designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to offer condolences to King Salman bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia on the death of King Abdallah bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on January 27:

Barack Obama (head of delegation);
Joseph W. Westphal:
John F. Kerry;
John S. McCain III;
Mark R. Warner;
Nancy Pelosi;
Eliot L. Engel;
Ami Bera;
Joseph Crowley;
Valerie B. Jarrett;
Susan E. Rice;
John D. Podesta;
Anita Decker Breckenridge;
Christina M. Tchen;
Jennifer M. Palmieri;
Benjamin J. Rhodes;
Lisa O. Monaco;
Joshua R. Earnest;
Chase Cushman;
Peter A. Selfridge;
John O. Brennan;
Melissa Winter;
Lloyd J. Austin III;
James A. Baker III;
Condoleezza Rice;
Brian Deese;
Brent Scowcroft;
Samuel R. "Sandy" Berger;
Stephen J. Hadley; and
Frances Fragos Townsend.

The President declared a major disaster for the Soboba Band of Luiseño Indians and ordered Federal aid to supplement the Tribe's efforts in the area affected by severe storms, flooding, and mudslides from December 4 through 6, 2014.

January 28

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall, VA. Later, he returned to Washington, DC.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras of Greece to congratulate him on his recent election victory and discuss continued economic reforms in Greece and Greece-U.S. relations.

January 29

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of State John F. Kerry. Later, he traveled to Philadelphia, PA, arriving in the evening.

In the evening, the President returned to Washington, DC.

The White House announced that the President will welcome the 2014 National Hockey League Champion Los Angeles Kings and the 2014 Major League Soccer Cup Champion L.A. Galaxy to the White House on February 2.

January 30

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with members of the Social and Behavioral Sciences Team of the Office of Science and Technology Policy.

January 31

In the afternoon, at the home of Vernon E. Jordan, Jr., the President and White House Senior Adviser Valerie B. Jarrett attended the Alfalfa Club luncheon.

February 1

In the afternoon, in the White House Kitchen, the President participated in a live interview with Savannah Guthrie for NBC's "Super Bowl XLIX Pre-Game Show." Then, in the Map Room, he recorded a second interview with Ms. Guthrie for NBC's "Today" program for later broadcast.

February 2

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Later, at the Department of Homeland Security, he toured the Operations Center with Secretary of Homeland Security Jeh C. Johnson and Operations and Planning Director Richard M. Chávez, and greeted staff.

In the afternoon, the President returned to the White House. Then, in the Private Dining Room, he and Vice President Biden had lunch.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany to the White House on February 9.

February 3

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the evening, in the Oval Office, the President, Vice President Biden, and Secretary of State John F. Kerry met with King Abdullah II of Jordan to discuss the execution of Jordanian pilot Moaz al-Kasasbeh by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Indianapolis, IN, on February 6.

The President declared a major disaster in Vermont and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by a severe winter storm from December 9 through 12, 2014.

February 4

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Roosevelt Room, the President met with 14 American Muslim leaders to discuss domestic, national security, and foreign policy issues.

In the evening, on the State Floor, the President hosted a reception for new Members of Congress.

The President announced the nomination of Eileen Maura Decker to be U.S. attorney for the Central District of California.

The President announced the nomination of John W. Huber to be U.S. attorney for the District of Utah.

The President announced the nomination of Waverly D. Crenshaw, Jr., to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Tennessee.

The President announced the nomination of Lawrence J. Vilardo to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Western District of New York.

February 5

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President met with Nadia Lopez, principal, and Vidal Chastanet, student, of Mott Hall Bridges Academy, and photographer Brandon Stanton of Humans of New York. Then, also in the Oval Office, he had an intelligence briefing.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Head Coach William S. Belichick of the National Football League's New England Patriots to congratulate him on his team's victory in Super Bowl XLIX.

The President announced his intention to appoint Anthony Scott as Federal Chief Information Officer and Administrator of the Office of Electronic Government at the Office of Management and Budget.

The President announced his intention to appoint Ajay Banga as a member of the Advisory Committee for Trade Policy and Negotiations.

The President announced his intention to appoint Frankie M. Freeman and Ross Romero as members of the Commission on Presidential Scholars.

The President announced his intention to appoint Chrysten Lambert as Federal representative of the Klamath River Compact Commission.

The President announced his intention to appoint Earl W. Stafford as a member of the Board of Trustees of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.

February 6

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Indianapolis, IN.

In the evening, the President returned to Washington, DC.

February 9

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden met with Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany.

In the afternoon, in the Cabinet Room, the President and Vice President Biden had a working lunch with Chancellor Merkel.

The White House announced that the President will travel to San Francisco, CA, on February 12.

February 10

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Cabinet Room, the President and Vice President Biden met with members of the Congressional Black Caucus to discuss the national economy, criminal justice reform, and U.S. participation in international trade negotiations and agreements. Later, in the Map Room, he participated in an interview with Ben Smith of BuzzFeed News.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with President Petro Poroshenko of Ukraine to discuss the situation in eastern Ukraine and express his support for the recent cease-fire and peace negotiations. He also had a telephone conversation with President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia to discuss the situation in eastern Ukraine, reiterate U.S. support for Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity, and encourage President Putin to seize the opportunity presented by peace talks with France, Germany, and Ukraine. He also had a telephone conversation with President Xi Jinping of China to discuss China-U.S. relations.

The President announced the designation of John Emerson as a member of the Presidential delegation to attend the funeral services of former President Richard von Weizsacker of Germany in Berlin, Germany, on February 11.

February 11

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Roosevelt Room, he met with private sector and foundation leaders to thank them for their support in working to contain the Ebola epidemic in West Africa and emphasize the need to improve detection and prevention efforts going forward.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had lunch. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of Defense Charles T. Hagel.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Palm Springs, CA, on February 14.

The President announced the designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to attend the Inauguration of Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic as President of Croatia in Zagreb, Croatia, on February 15:

Elizabeth Sherwood-Randall (head of delegation);
Kenneth H. Merten;
Hoyt B. Yee; and
Capricia Penavic Marshall.

The President announced his intention to nominate Sarah E. Mendelson to be U.S. Representative to the United Nations Economic and Social Council, with the rank of Ambassador.

The President announced his intention to appoint Peter J. Beshar as a member of the Board of Trustees of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.

The President announced his intention to appoint Kathryn Brinsfield as Assistant Secretary for Health Affairs and Chief Medical Officer at the Department of Homeland Security.

The President announced his intention to appoint Allen Croff as a member of the Nuclear Waste Technical Review Board.

The President announced his intention to appoint Todd McCracken as a member of the Advisory Committee for Trade Policy and Negotiations.

February 12

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Mohammad Nawaz Sharif of Pakistan to discuss Pakistan-U.S. relations and regional stability and commend Pakistan's counterterrorism efforts and progress in improving relations with Afghanistan.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to San Francisco, CA. Upon arrival, he traveled to the Fairmont San Francisco hotel, where he remained overnight.

February 13

In the morning, the President traveled to Stanford, CA.

In the afternoon, in the Memorial Auditorium at Stanford University, the President participated in a roundtable discussion and working lunch with business leaders, followed by a meeting with Stanford students. Later, he traveled to San Francisco, CA.

In the evening, the President returned to the Fairmont San Francisco hotel, where he remained overnight.

February 14

In the morning, the President traveled to the Sunnylands Estate in Rancho Mirage, CA. While en route aboard Air Force One, he had separate telephone conversations with Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany and President Petro Poroshenko of Ukraine to discuss the ongoing violence in eastern Ukraine, the cease-fire scheduled to begin at midnight, and the importance of implementing protocols of the Minsk agreement.

In the evening, the President traveled to a private residence in the Thunderbird Heights neighborhood, where he remained overnight.

February 15

In the morning, the President traveled to Rancho Mirage, CA.

In the evening, the President returned to a private residence in the Thunderbird Heights neighborhood, where he remained overnight.

The White House announced that the President will return to Washington, DC, on February 16.

February 16

In the morning, the President traveled to the Porcupine Creek Golf Course.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the evening.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt of Denmark to offer his condolences for the deaths of two Danish citizens and the injuries of several others in the February 14 terrorist attacks in Copenhagen, discuss the importance of confronting attacks on freedom of expression and acts of anti-Semitic violence, and welcome Denmark's participation in the upcoming White House Summit on Countering Violent Extremism.

February 17

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had a telephone conversation with President Sergio Mattarella of Italy to congratulate him on his recent election victory and discuss Italy-U.S. relations. Then, also in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Secretary of Health and Human Services Sylvia Mathews Burwell to receive an update on enrollment in health insurance exchanges under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. Later, also in the Oval Office, he visited with outgoing U.S. Agency for International Development Administrator Rajiv J. Shah and his family.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Chicago, IL, on February 19.

February 18

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Senate Minority Leader Harry M. Reid. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of the Treasury Jacob J. Lew.

February 19

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President signed a proclamation establishing the Browns Canyon National Monument. Later, he traveled to Chicago, IL, arriving in the afternoon.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to his Hyde Park-Kenwood residence, where he received an update from Obama Foundation board member Martin H. Nesbitt on the Obama Presidential Library site selection process.

In the evening, the President returned to Washington, DC.

February 20

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, at the Hyatt Regency Washington on Capitol Hill hotel, he attended a Democratic National Committee roundtable fundraiser.

During the day, in the Diplomatic Reception Room, the President and Mrs. Obama recorded a video to commemorate the fifth anniversary of the "Let's Move!" initiative. Later, in the Roosevelt Room, he recorded a StoryCorps interview with Noah McQueen, a "My Brother's Keeper" initiative mentee.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Amir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani of Qatar to the White House on February 24.

The White House announced that the President will welcome President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia to the White House on February 27.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Prince Charles of Wales and Duchess Camilla of Cornwall to the White House on March 19.

February 23

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President and Vice President Biden had lunch. Later, in the Oval Office, he participated in a credentialing ceremony for newly appointed Ambassadors to the U.S.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Miami, FL, on February 25.

February 24

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Biden met with State and local law enforcement officials to discuss efforts to build trust in communities and strengthen public safety. Then, also in the Oval Office, he participated in a signing ceremony for the proclamation establishing the Honouliuli National Monument. Later, in the Cabinet Room, he and Vice President Biden met with Members of Congress to discuss criminal justice reform.

The President announced his intention to nominate Katherine Simonds Dhanani to be Ambassador to Somalia.

The President announced his intention to nominate Amias M. Gerety to be Assistant Secretary for Financial Institutions at the Department of the Treasury.

The President announced his intention to nominate Cono R. Namorato to be Assistant Attorney General for the Tax Division at the Department of Justice.

The President announced his intention to nominate Anne E. Wall to be Deputy Under Secretary for Legislative Affairs at the Department of the Treasury and, upon appointment, to designate her as Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs.

The President announced his intention to appoint Laura DeBonis and Solomon B. Watson IV as members of the Public Interest Declassification Board.

The President announced his intention to appoint John W. Keker as a member of the Board of Directors of the Presidio Trust.

The President announced his intention to appoint Joan E. Silber as a member of the Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad.

February 25

In the morning, in the Roosevelt Room, the President met with immigration advocacy leaders to provide an update on the administration's executive actions to reform the U.S. immigration system.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Miami, FL. Upon arrival, he traveled to Florida International University, where, in the Graham Center, he recorded a "Five Things" segment with José Díaz-Balart of MSNBC's "Rundown With José Díaz-Balart" program for later broadcast. Later, he returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the evening. While en route aboard Air Force One, he had a telephone conversation with C. Douglas McMillon, president and chief executive officer of Walmart, to commend him on increasing wages for Walmart's employees.

February 26

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Then, in the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building, he met with African American faith and civil rights leaders to discuss issues facing their communities, including criminal justice, education, health care, and economic development.

In the afternoon, in the Roosevelt Room, the President participated in separate "Live From the White House" interviews with local television anchors Kerstin Kealy of WDAY in Fargo, ND, Kris Ketz of KMBC in Kansas City, MO, Laural Porter of KGW in Portland, OR, and Eric Johnson of KOMO in Seattle, WA, to discuss the importance of exports and trade to U.S. jobs.

The President announced the nomination of Mary Barzee Flores to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Florida.

The President announced the nomination of Julien X. Neals to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the District of New Jersey.

February 27

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Map Room, the President had lunch with participants in the "My Brother's Keeper" initiative's mentorship program.

In the evening, in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of Homeland Security Jeh C. Johnson, Office of Management and Budget Director Shaun L.S. Donovan, and other senior advisers to discuss the impending deadline for funding the Department of Homeland Security. Then, he had separate telephone conversations with House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi and Senate Minority Leader Harry M. Reid to receive an update on efforts to ensure that the Department of Homeland Security does not shut down due to a lapse in funding.

The White House announced that the President will welcome European Council President Donald Franciszek Tusk to the White House on March 9.

The White House announced that the President will welcome President Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai of Afghanistan to the White House on March 24.

February 28

The President announced the designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to attend the Inauguration of Tabaré Vázquez as President of Uruguay in Montevideo, Uruguay, on March 1: Krysta Harden (head of delegation); Bradley Freden; and Michele J. Sison.

March 2

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Roosevelt Room, the President met with Technology CEO Council members Ursula M. Burns, Michael S. Dell, D. Mark Durcan, Steven M. Mollenkopf, Virginia M. Rometty, and Joseph M. Tucci.

March 3

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Situation Room, he participated in a video conference with Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom, President François Hollande of France, Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany, Prime Minister Matteo Renzi of Italy, and European Council President Donald Franciszek Tusk to discuss the situation in eastern Ukraine, Russia's support for the separatists, the need for greater cooperation with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and for strengthening its monitoring role, implementation and enforcement of the Minsk agreement, recent political reforms passed by Ukraine's Parliament, and the international commitment to financial assistance to Ukraine. They also discussed the ongoing violence in Libya and how to counter ISIL's involvement and promote a political resolution to the conflict.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with his senior advisers.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Selma, AL, on March 7.

The President announced his intention to nominate John Conger to be Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller).

The President announced his intention to nominate Gregory T. Delawie to be Ambassador to Kosovo.

The President announced his intention to nominate Peter Levine to be Deputy Chief Management Officer at the Department of Defense.

The President announced his intention to nominate Vanessa L. Allen Sutherland to be Chairperson and member of the Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board.

The President announced his intention to appoint Robert Teranishi as a member of the Board of Directors of the National Board for Education Sciences.

March 4

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President met with White House Counsel W. Neil Eggleston to receive an update on the U.S. Supreme Court case *Black* v. *Burwell*.

In the afternoon, the President signed H.R. 240, the Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act, 2015.

In the evening, the President had a telephone conversation with U.S. Ambassador to South Korea Mark W. Lippert.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Prime Minister Enda Kenny of Ireland to the White House on March 17.

March 5

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President and Vice President Biden had lunch. Later, in the Oval Office, he recorded separate interviews with Thomas Joyner and Sybil Wilkes of the "Tom Joyner Morning Show" and Joseph E. Madison of the "Madison Show" for later broadcast.

March 6

In the morning, the President traveled to Columbia, SC, arriving in the afternoon.

In the afternoon, upon arrival, the President traveled to West Columbia, SC, where, at the Brookland Banquet and Conference Center, he greeted patrons. Later, he traveled to Columbia.

In the evening, the President returned to Washington, DC.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Atlanta, GA, on March 10.

March 7

In the morning, the President, Mrs. Obama, their daughters Malia and Sasha, and Mrs. Obama's mother Marian Robinson traveled to Selma, AL. While en route aboard Air Force One, he signed legislation to award a Congressional Gold Medal to participants in "Bloody Sunday," "Turnaround Tuesday," or the final Selma-to-Montgomery Voting Rights March in March 1965.

In the afternoon, the President, Mrs. Obama, their daughters Malia and Sasha, and former President George W. Bush and First

Lady Laura Bush participated in a walk across the Edmund Pettus Bridge to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the "Bloody Sunday" civil rights march in Selma. Then, he, Mrs. Obama, and their daughters Malia and Sasha toured the National Voting Rights Museum and Institute. Later, also at the Voting Rights Museum, he recorded an interview with Bill Plante of CBS News for later broadcast. Later, he, Mrs. Obama, their daughters Malia and Sasha, and Mrs. Obama's mother Marian Robinson returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the evening.

March 9

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

March 10

In the morning, the President traveled to Atlanta, GA, arriving in the afternoon.

In the afternoon, in the visitors' locker room of the McCamish Pavilion at the Georgia Institute of Technology, the President met with actor and comedian Tyler Perry. Then, also in the visitors' locker room, he met with Tara Lax, a special education teacher who had written him a letter about the rewards of working with children with special needs, and Georgia Tech student Tiffany Davis, who had written him a letter about her college loans. Later, he traveled to Manuel's Tavern, where he participated in a roundtable interview on college affordability with high school and college students. Then, also at Manuel's Tavern, he participated in an interview with Shane Smith, cofounder of VICE News.

Later in the afternoon, the President traveled to the Hyatt Regency Atlanta hotel, where he attended a Democratic National Committee roundtable fundraiser.

In the evening, the President returned to Washington, DC.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Los Angeles, CA, on March 12.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Phoenix, AZ, on March 13.

The President announced his intention to nominate Edward L. Ayers to be a member of the National Council of the Humanities.

The President announced his intention to nominate David Hale to be Ambassador to Pakistan.

The President announced his intention to nominate Kathryn K. Matthew to be Director of the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

The President announced his intention to nominate Carol Fortine Ochoa to be Inspector General of the General Services Administration.

The President announced his intention to nominate Eric M. Satz to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Valley Authority.

The President announced his intention to appoint Edward D. Dunson, Jr., as a member of the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts.

The President announced his intention to appoint Lisa Ling as a member of the President's Commission on White House Fellowships.

The President announced his intention to appoint Jose Rodriguez as a member of the Board of Directors of the Border Environment Cooperation Commission and the North American Development Bank.

The President announced his intention to appoint Eric D. Schwerin as a member of the Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad.

The President announced his intention to appoint Delia Haak as U.S. Commissioner of the Arkansas-Oklahoma Arkansas River Compact Commission.

The President announced his intention to appoint Joel West Williams as Alternate U.S. Commissioner of the Arkansas-Oklahoma Arkansas River Compact Commission.

March 11

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President joined a teleconference convened by Secretary of Education Arne Duncan with col-

lege newspaper editors to discuss the Student Aid Bill of Rights. Later, in the Grand Foyer, he met with 2015 Intel Science Talent Search student finalists.

The White House announced that the President will host a student film festival on March 20 to showcase ideas on the theme, "The Impact of Giving Back."

March 12

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President met with Secretary of State John F. Kerry. Then, in the Situation Room, he had a video conference with President Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai and Chief Executive Officer Abdullah Abdullah of Afghanistan to discuss the progress toward forming a national unity government, strengthening Afghan-U.S. relations, and improving security in Afghanistan.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Los Angeles, CA. Upon arrival, he traveled to Hollywood, CA, where, at ABC Studios, he recorded an interview with Jimmy Kimmel of ABC's "Jimmy Kimmel Live" program.

In the evening, the President traveled to Santa Monica, CA, where, at a private residence, he attended a Democratic National Committee roundtable fundraiser. Later, he traveled to the InterContinental Los Angeles Century City hotel, where he remained overnight.

The President announced his intention to nominate Ian C. Kelly to be Ambassador to the Republic of Georgia.

The President announced his intention to nominate Patricia M. Loui-Schmicker to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Export-Import Bank of the U.S.

The President announced his intention to appoint Brandon McBride as Administrator of the Rural Utilities Service at the Department of Agriculture.

The President announced his intention to appoint Loren Kieve and Princess Daazhraii Lucaj as members of the Board of Trustees of the Institute of American Indian and Alaska Native Culture and Arts Development.

The President declared a major disaster in Maine and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by a severe winter storm, snowstorm, and flooding from January 26 through 28.

March 13

In the morning, the President traveled to Phoenix, AZ, where, at the Carl T. Hayden Veterans Affairs Medical Center, he participated in a roundtable discussion with Veterans Health Administration employees, veteran advocates and patients, and Members of Congress on the issues facing the Department of Veterans Affairs.

In the afternoon, at the Carl T. Hayden Veterans Affairs Medical Center, the President met with Carl and Marsha Mueller, parents, and Eric Mueller, brother, of U.S. aid worker Kayla J. Mueller, who was killed by members of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization in Syria on February 6 . Then, he traveled to Gilbert, AZ. Later, he returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the evening.

March 14

In the evening, in the grand ballroom of the Renaissance Washington, DC Downtown Hotel, the President made remarks at the annual Gridiron Club dinner.

March 16

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President had a telephone conversation with Sen. Orrin G. Hatch to discuss legislation granting the President trade promotion authority. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with Boys and Girls Clubs of America President and Chief Executive Officer James L. Clark and organization members.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Cleveland, OH, on March 18.

March 17

In the afternoon, in the Rayburn Room of the U.S. Capitol, the President, Vice President Joe Biden, and Prime Minister Enda Kenny of Ireland attended the annual Friends of Ireland

St. Patrick's Day luncheon. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of Defense Ashton B. Carter.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Prime Minister Matteo Renzi of Italy to the White House on April 17.

The White House announced that the President will host the 2015 White House Science Fair on March 23.

March 18

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had a telephone conversation with Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany to discuss the situation in Ukraine and economic reforms in Greece. Then, he traveled to Cleveland, OH, arriving in the afternoon.

In the afternoon, at Cleveland State University, the President toured a Manufacturing Advocacy and Growth Network (MAGNET) innovation center with Vice President for Client Services and Marketing Ethan Karp and met with officials and employees of participating companies. Later, he returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the evening.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Jamaica and Panama from April 8 through 11.

The President announced his intention to nominate Douglas J. Kramer to be Deputy Administrator of the Small Business Administration.

The President announced his intention to nominate David J. Shulkin to be Under Secretary for Health at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The President announced his intention to nominate LaVerne Horton Council to be Assistant Secretary for Information and Technology at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The President announced his intention to nominate Juan M. Garcia III to be Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs at the Department of Defense.

The President announced his intention to nominate Andrew J. Read to be a member of the Marine Mammal Commission, and upon appointment, to designate him as Chairman.

The President announced his intention to nominate Stephen P. Welby to be Assistant Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering at the Department of Defense.

The President announced his intention to appoint the following individuals as members of the National Commission on the Future of the Army:

Larry R. Ellis;
Kathleen H. Hicks;
Thomas R. Lamont; and
Jack C. Stultz.

The President announced his intention to appoint Chad Dickerson, Gary Hirshberg, and Dennis D. Williams as members of the Advisory Committee for Trade Policy and Negotiations.

March 19

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he signed an Executive order titled "Planning for Federal Sustainability in the Next Decade." Later, at the Department of Energy, he toured a rooftop solar panel installation with Deputy Secretary of Energy Elizabeth Sherwood-Randall, Federal Environmental Executive Kate E. Brandt, and Energy Department Energy Manager Eric R. Haukdal.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Charles, Prince of Wales, and his wife Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall, of the United Kingdom. Vice President Biden also attended. Later, he had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel to congratulate him on his party's success in the recent parliamentary elections and discuss Israel-U.S. relations, the Arab-Israeli peace process, and ongoing diplomatic efforts to prevent Iran's development of nuclear weapons.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with President Beji Caid Essebsi of Tunisia to offer his condolences for the deaths and injuries caused by the March 18 terrorist attack at the National Bardo Museum

in Tunis and to discuss Tunisia-U.S. counterterrorism and security cooperation.

The President announced the designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to attend the Inauguration of Hage Geingob as President of Namibia and the commemoration of the 25th anniversary of Namibia's independence in Windhoek, Namibia, on March 21:

Heather A. Higginbottom (head of delegation);
Thomas F. Daughton;
Karen R. Bass;
Linda Thomas-Greenfield; and
Deborah L. Birx.

March 20

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Later, also in the Oval Office, he had a telephone conversation with President François Hollande of France to discuss ongoing diplomatic efforts to prevent Iran's development of nuclear weapons and the situation in Ukraine.

In the afternoon, in the Cabinet Room, the President participated in an interview with Sam Stein of the Huffington Post. Later, he attended a farewell party for White House Communications Director Jennifer M. Palmieri in her office.

March 21

In the morning, the President traveled to College Park, MD, where, at the XFINITY Center, he attended a women's basketball game between Princeton University and the University of Wisconsin–Green Bay with his brother-in-law Craig M. Robinson and other members of the Robinson family.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC.

March 23

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Later, on the State Floor, he viewed projects on exhibit for the White House Science Fair and visited with student participants.

In the afternoon, the President met with former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

In the evening, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong of Singapore to express his condolences on the death of founding Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew and discuss Singapore-U.S. relations.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Birmingham, AL, on March 26.

The White House announced that the annual White House Easter Egg Roll will take place on April 6.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi of Iraq on April 14.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan to the White House on April 28.

March 24

In the morning, in the Cabinet Room, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an expanded bilateral meeting with President Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai of Afghanistan. Chief Executive Officer Abdullah Abdullah and Minister of Foreign Affairs Salahuddin Rabbani of Afghanistan and National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice also attended. Later, in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Biden had a restricted bilateral meeting with President Ghani.

In the afternoon, in the Old Family Dining Room, the President and Vice President Biden had a working lunch with President Ghani. Later, in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of State John F. Kerry.

During the day, the President had separate telephone conversations with Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany and Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy Brey of Spain to extend his condolences for the loss of life in the crash of Germanwings Flight 4U9525 in the French Alps and offer U.S. assistance in the crash investigation.

The President announced his intention to nominate Kathleen A. Doherty to be Ambassador to Cyprus.

The President announced his intention to nominate Hans G. Klemm to be Ambassador to Romania.

The President announced his intention to nominate Jeffrey M. Prieto to be General Counsel at the Department of Agriculture.

The President announced his intention to nominate Lucy Tamlyn to be Ambassador to Benin.

The President announced his intention to appoint Wanda M. Austin as a member of the President's Council of Advisers on Science and Technology.

The President announced his intention to appoint Thomas O. Melius as a Commissioner of the U.S. Section of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission.

March 25

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Secretary of Health and Human Services Sylvia Mathews Burwell.

During the day, in the Oval Office, the President met with members of the Boy Scouts of America.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Palm City, FL, on March 28.

The White House announced that the President and Mrs. Obama will welcome His Holiness Pope Francis to the White House on September 23.

The President announced the designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to attend the state funeral of former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore in Singapore on March 29:

William J. Clinton (head of delegation);
Kirk W.B. Wagar;
Henry A. Kissinger;
Steven Green; and
Thomas E. Donilon.

The President declared a major disaster in New Hampshire and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by the severe winter storm and snowstorm from January 26 through 28.

March 26

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had a telephone conversation with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey to discuss ongoing cooperation in combating the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization, common efforts to bring security and stability to Iraq and Syria, Turkey's humanitarian support of nearly 2 million refugees from Iraq and Syria, the situations in Yemen and Ukraine, and international diplomatic efforts to prevent Iran's development of a nuclear weapon. Then, also in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Birmingham, AL. Later, he returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the evening.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany to discuss the ongoing international diplomatic efforts to prevent Iran's development of a nuclear weapon.

The White House announced that the President, Mrs. Obama, and Vice President Joe Biden will travel to Boston, MA, on March 30.

The President announced his intention to nominate Franklin R. Parker to be Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Manpower and Reserve Affairs.

The President announced his intention to nominate Atul Keshap to be Ambassador to Sri Lanka and Maldives.

The President announced his intention to nominate Julieta Valls Noyes to be Ambassador to Croatia.

The President announced his intention to nominate Alaina B. Teplitz to be Ambassador to Nepal.

The President announced the nomination of John M. Vazquez to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the District of New Jersey.

The President announced the nomination of Paula Xinis to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the District of Maryland.

March 27

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Secretary of the Treasury Jacob J. Lew.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with King Salman bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia to discuss the situation in Yemen and Saudi Arabia-U.S. relations.

March 28

In the morning, the President traveled to Fort Pierce, FL. Upon arrival, he traveled to the Floridian National Golf Club in Palm City, FL, arriving in the afternoon. He remained there overnight in a guest cottage.

March 29

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the evening.

March 30

In the morning, the President and Mrs. Obama traveled to Boston, MA. Upon arrival, they traveled to the Edward M. Kennedy Institute for the United States Senate. Also in the morning, he was briefed on the shooting at the National Security Agency in Fort Meade, MD.

In the afternoon, in rotating exhibit room 126 of the Kennedy Institute, the President, Mrs. Obama, and Vice President Joe Biden met with members of the Kennedy family. Then, the President and Mrs. Obama viewed a replica of former Sen. Kennedy's office with his widow Victoria Reggie Kennedy, and the President greeted students in a replica of the Senate Chamber.

Later in the afternoon, the President traveled to Cambridge, MA, where, at the Area Four restaurant in Kendall Square, he attended a Democratic National Committee roundtable fundraiser. Then, he and Mrs. Obama returned to Washington, DC.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Louisville, KY, on April 2.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Kenya in July.

March 31

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he had a telephone conversation with President Abdel fattah Said Elsisi of Egypt to discuss U.S. military assistance, the situations in Libya and Yemen, and U.S. support for human rights in Egypt. He also received an update on the U.S. negotiating team's progress in Lausanne, Switzerland, as part of an international diplomatic effort to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President had a telephone conversation with President Joseph Kabila of Rwanda to discuss democratic elections in 2016, continued efforts to defeat the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda insurgent group, and pending adoptions by U.S. families. Later, also in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of Defense Ashton B. Carter.

In the evening, in the Situation Room, the President, Vice President Biden, and members of the President's national security team participated in a video conference with Secretary of State John F. Kerry, Secretary of Energy Ernest J. Moniz, and the U.S. negotiating team in Lausanne, Switzerland, to discuss international diplomatic efforts to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon.

The President declared a major disaster in West Virginia and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by a severe winter storm, flooding, landslides, and mudslides from March 3 through 6.

April 1

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Roosevelt Room, they met with senior advisers to discuss college affordability.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President and Vice President Biden had lunch.

During the day, the President signed H.R. 1527, the Slain Officer Family Support Act of

2015. He also met with White House Chief of Staff Denis R. McDonough and Director of Communications Jennifer R. Psaki.

Also during the day, the President had separate telephone conversations with President Goodluck Jonathan and President-elect Muhammadu Buhari of Nigeria to commend them for their leadership during the recent Presidential election and pledge continued U.S. support for efforts to defeat the Boko Haram terrorist organization.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Hill Air Force Base, UT, on April 2.

April 2

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Louisville, KY. While en route aboard Air Force One, he had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel to reaffirm U.S. commitment to Israel's security and discuss diplomatic efforts to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon. Upon arrival in Louisville, he traveled to the Indatus ICIM Corp., where he toured the facilities with President Philip Hawkins and greeted employees.

Also in the afternoon, the President had a telephone conversation with Speaker of the House of Representatives John A. Boehner to discuss international diplomatic efforts to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon.

During the day, in the Oval Office, the President met with Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Benjamin J. Rhodes to prepare for his remarks on international diplomatic efforts to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon.

Also during the day, the President had separate telephone conversations with Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom, President François Hollande of France, and Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany to thank them for their cooperation and support of the diplomatic efforts to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon. He also had a telephone conversation with King Salman bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia to discuss the diplomatic efforts to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon and reaffirm U.S. commitment to the security of its allies in the Persian Gulf region.

In the evening, the President traveled to Salt Lake City, UT. Upon arrival, he traveled to the Sheraton Salt Lake City Hotel. While en route in the Presidential limousine, he met with Gov. Gary R. Herbert of Utah. Later, in Room Wildcat, he met with Dieter F. Uchtdorf and Henry B. Eyring, presidents of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, and other church representatives to discuss immigration reform and the church's longstanding commitment to public service and relief work. He remained at the hotel overnight.

The President declared a major disaster in Tennessee and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by a severe winter storm and flooding from February 15 through 22.

April 3

In the morning, the President traveled to Hill Air Force Base, UT, where he participated in a roundtable discussion on clean energy and toured a solar panel array with Ronald E. Jolly, Sr., deputy commander of maintenance, Ogden Air Logistics Complex. Later, the President returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the afternoon. While en route aboard Air Force One, he had a telephone conversation with President Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya to offer his and Mrs. Obama's condolences for the loss of life caused by the April 2 terrorist attack at Garissa University College in Garissa, Kenya.

Also aboard Air Force One, he had separate telephone conversations with King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa of Bahrain, Amir Sabah al-Ahmad al-Jabir al-Sabah of Kuwait, Amir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani of Qatar, and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan of Abu Dhabi to discuss international diplomatic efforts to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon and reaffirm U.S. commitment

to the security of its allies in the Persian Gulf region.

In the evening, in the Old Family Dining Room, the President and Mrs. Obama hosted a Seder to mark the beginning of Passover.

The White House announced that the President will welcome King Willem-Alexander and Queen Maxima of the Netherlands to the White House on June 1.

The President declared a major disaster in Rhode Island and ordered Federal aid to supplement State, tribal, and local recovery efforts in the area affected by a severe winter storm and snowstorm from January 26 through 28.

April 4

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President participated in an interview with Thomas L. Friedman of the New York Times for later broadcast online.

April 5

In the morning, the President, Mrs. Obama, and their daughters Malia and Sasha traveled to Alexandria, VA, where, at the Alfred Street Baptist Church, they attended an Easter Sunday service.

In the afternoon, the President, Mrs. Obama, and their daughters Malia and Sasha returned to Washington, DC.

April 6

In the morning, on the South Lawn, the President and Mrs. Obama participated in the White House Easter Egg Roll, and the President read "Where the Wild Things Are" to children attending the event. Then, on the White House basketball court, he played basketball with youths and players from the National Basketball Association's Washington Wizards.

In the afternoon, the President recorded an interview with Steve Inskeep of NPR's "Morning Edition" program for later broadcast.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Sultan Qaboos bin Said Al Said of Oman to discuss the framework of a Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) regarding Iran's nuclear program and reaffirm the U.S. commitment to addressing Iran's destabilizing activities in the Persian Gulf region.

April 7

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had lunch. Later, at the Howard University College of Medicine, he recorded an interview with Chief Medical Correspondent Sanjay Gupta for CNN's "New Day" program for later broadcast.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Head Coach Michael W. Krzyzewski of the Duke University men's basketball team to congratulate him on his team's victory in the NCAA men's basketball championship.

The President announced his intention to nominate Gabriel Camarillo to be Assistant Secretary for Manpower and Reserve Affairs at the Department of the Air Force.

The President announced his intention to nominate Joyce L. Connery to be a member of the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board, and upon appointment, to designate her as Chair.

The President announced his intention to nominate Bruce Hamilton to be a member of the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board.

The President announced his intention to nominate William A. Heidt to be Ambassador to Cambodia.

The President announced his intention to nominate David M. Robinson to be Assistant Secretary for Conflict and Stabilization Operations and Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization at the Department of State.

The President announced his intention to appoint Kevin Griffis as Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs at the Department of Health and Human Services.

The President announced the designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to attend the Smart Cities-Smart Growth Business Development Presidential Trade Mission in Beijing, China: Ernest J. Moniz (head of delegation); Penny S.

Pritzker (head of delegation); and Max S. Baucus.

April 8

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden met with Secretary of State John F. Kerry.

In the afternoon, in the Situation Room, the President received an update from his international health and national security teams on efforts to prevent new Ebola cases in West Africa and end the epidemic in Sierra Leone and Guinea. He also had a telephone conversation with President Raúl Castro Ruz of Cuba to discuss Cuba-U.S relations. Later, he traveled to Kingston, Jamaica. Upon arrival, he traveled to the Jamaica Pegasus hotel.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Head Coach Geno Auriemma of the University of Connecticut women's basketball team to congratulate him on his team's victory in the NCAA women's basketball championship.

In the evening, at the Jamaica Pegasus hotel, the President visited with U.S. Embassy personnel and their families. Later, he traveled to the Bob Marley Museum, where he toured the house and museum exhibits with guide Natasha Clarke. Then, he returned to the Jamaica Pegasus hotel, where he remained overnight.

The President declared a major disaster in Connecticut and ordered Federal aid to supplement State, tribal, and local recovery efforts in the area affected by a severe winter storm and snowstorm from January 26 through 28.

April 9

In the morning, the President traveled to Jamaica House, the official residence of the Prime Minister of Jamaica, where, in the lobby, he signed the guest book.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Mona, Jamaica, where, at the Regional Headquarters Building of the University of the West Indies, Mona–Western Jamaica Campus, he participated in a family photograph with leaders of the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM). Then, he returned to Kingston, where, at the National Heroes' Park War Memorial, he participated in a wreath-laying ceremony.

Later in the afternoon, the President traveled to Panama City, Panama, arriving in the evening.

In the evening, upon arrival in Panama City, the President traveled to the Westin Playa Bonita Panama hotel, where he visited with U.S. Embassy personnel and their families. Later, he traveled to a private residence, where he remained overnight.

April 10

In the morning, the President traveled to the Hotel Riu Plaza Panama. While en route, he stopped at the Miraflores Locks of the Panama Canal, where he toured canal facilities and an operations building. Later, at the Hotel Riu Plaza Panama, he participated in a signing ceremony between the Boeing Co. and Copa Airlines.

In the evening, the President traveled to the ATLAPA Convention Center, where he participated in arrival and inaugural ceremonies for the Summit of the Americas. Then, he traveled to Panamá Viejo, Panama City's historic district, where he participated in an official photograph for Summit of the Americas leaders. Then, he attended a dinner and a cultural performance with Summit of the Americas leaders. Later, he returned to a private residence, where he remained overnight.

April 11

In the morning, the President traveled to the ATLAPA Convention Center, where he participated in a Summit of the Americas leaders' retreat. Then, he met with Prime Minister Stephen J. Harper of Canada.

In the afternoon, at the ATLAPA Convention Center, the President participated in a family photograph with Summit of the Americas leaders. Later, he participated in the second plenary session of the Summit of the Americas. Then, on the margins of the plenary session, he met with President Nicolas Maduro Moros of Venezuela.

In the evening, the President returned to Washington, DC.

April 13

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with 4–H Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) students during their visit to the White House with Secretary of Agriculture Thomas J. Vilsack. Later, in the Roosevelt Room, he and National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice met with leaders of Jewish organizations to discuss international diplomatic efforts to prevent Iran from a developing a nuclear weapon. Then, in the Diplomatic Reception Room, the President participated in separate "Live From the White House" television interviews with Jerry Revish of WBNS in Columbus, OH, Ron Martin of WGAL in Harrisburg, PA, John Stofflet of WMTV in Madison, WI, Cindy Williams of WCSH in Portland, ME, and Nancy Naeve of KSFY in Sioux Falls, SD, to discuss efforts to strengthen the national economy.

Later in the afternoon, in the Roosevelt Room, the President met with Jewish community leaders to discuss international diplomatic efforts to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Charlotte, NC, on April 15.

The President announced his intention to nominate Glyn T. Davies to be Ambassador to Thailand.

The President announced his intention to nominate Carol Waller Pope to be a member of the Federal Labor Relations Authority, and upon appointment, to designate her as Chairman.

The President announced his intention to appoint Amanda Hesser as a member of the President's Commission on White House Fellowships.

The President declared a major disaster in Massachusetts and ordered Federal aid to supplement Commonwealth, tribal, and local recovery efforts in the area affected by a severe winter storm, snowstorm, and flooding from January 26 through 28.

April 14

The White House announced that the President will welcome Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan of Abu Dhabi, Deputy Supreme Commander of the United Arab Emirates Armed Forces, to the White House on April 20.

April 15

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Charlotte, NC. While en route aboard Air Force One, he was briefed on the landing of a gyrocopter on the West Front Lawn of the U.S. Capitol by Tampa, FL, resident Douglas M. Hughes. Later, he returned to Washington, DC.

The White House announced that the President will welcome the College Football Playoff National Champion Ohio State University football team to the White House on April 20.

The President announced the nomination of Wilhelmina M. Wright to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the District of Minnesota.

April 16

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President had lunch with Satya Nadella, chief executive officer of Microsoft Corp. Later, in the East Room, he hosted a Greek Independence Day reception. Vice President Biden also attended.

The White House announced that the President will welcome 2014 NASCAR Sprint Cup Series Champion Kevin Harvick and his Stewart-Haas Racing team members to the White House on April 21.

The White House announced that the President will welcome the 2015 Super Bowl Champion New England Patriots to the White House on April 23.

The President announced his intention to nominate Adam J. Szubin to be Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Crimes at the Department of the Treasury.

The President announced his intention to nominate Jeffrey J. Hawkins, Jr., to be Ambassador to the Central African Republic.

The President announced his intention to appoint Victoria Esser as Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs at the Department of the Treasury.

April 17

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President met with Prime Minister Matteo Renzi of Italy. Vice President Joe Biden also attended.

In the afternoon, in the Cabinet Room, the President had a working lunch with Prime Minister Renzi.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with King Salman bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia to discuss the situation in Yemen and Saudi Arabia-U.S. relations.

The White House announced that the President will welcome leaders of the Gulf Cooperation Council to the White House on May 13 and to Camp David, MD, on May 14.

April 20

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Later, also in the Oval Office, they met with Secretary of State John F. Kerry.

Later in the morning, the President met with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan of Abu Dhabi, Deputy Supreme Commander of the United Arab Emirates Armed Forces. Secretary of State John F. Kerry; National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice; and Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdallah bin Zayid Al Nuhayyan, Deputy National Security Adviser Tahnoun Bin Zayed, and Ambassador to the U.S. Yusif bin Mani bin Said al-Utayba of the United Arab Emirates also attended.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President and Vice President Biden had a working lunch with Crown Prince Mohammed. Later, in the Oval office, he and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of the Treasury Jacob J. Lew.

The White House announced that the President with travel to Everglades National Park in Homestead, FL, to commemorate Earth Day on April 22.

The White House announced that the President will welcome President Beji Caid Essebsi of Tunisia to the White House on May 21.

The President declared a major disaster in Georgia and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by a severe winter storm from February 15 through 17.

April 21

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Tyson's Corner, VA, where, at the Fairfax County Chamber of Commerce, he recorded a roundtable interview with Chris Matthews of MSNBC's "Hardball With Chris Matthews" program for later broadcast. Rep. Gerald E. Connolly, Fairfax County Chamber of Commerce President and Chief Executive Officer Jim Corcoran, Zansors, LLC, Chief Data Science Officer and Cofounder Abhijit Dasgupta, and Team Askin Technologies, Inc., President and Chief Executive Officer Debbie Askin also participated.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of Defense Ashton B. Carter.

The President announced the designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to attend the Centennial Commemoration of the Events of 1915 in Armenia on April 24:

Jacob J. Lew (head of delegation);
Richard M. Mills, Jr.;
Jacqueline Kanchelian Speier;
Frank Pallone, Jr.;
Anna G. Eshoo; and
Dave Trott.

April 22

In the morning, the President traveled to Miami, FL, arriving in the afternoon.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Homestead, FL, where he toured the grounds of Everglades National Park with South Florida Natural Resources Center Director Robert Johnson, Office of Everglades Restoration Initiatives Director Shannon A. Estenoz, and park ranger Alan Scott. Then, on the Visitors Center

Gazebo, he recorded an interview for a White House Earth Day video series with William S. Nye, television personality and executive director of the Planetary Society, for later online broadcast. Later, he returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the evening.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Elaine Weinstein, wife of U.S. aid worker Warren Weinstein, a hostage who was killed during a U.S. counterterrorism operation against an Al Qaida compound in Pakistan on January 15, to offer his condolences for the death of her husband. He also had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Matteo Renzi of Italy to discuss the death of Italian aid worker Giovanni Lo Porto, a hostage who was also killed during the January 15 operation, to offer his condolences for the death of Mr. Lo Porto.

The White House announced further details on the visit of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan to the White House on April 28.

April 23

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

The President announced his intention to appoint Mauro Morales as Staff Director of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights.

The President announced his intention to appoint Daniel Weiss as a member of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council.

April 24

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President and Vice President Biden had lunch. Later, he traveled to McLean, VA. Later, he returned to Washington, DC.

During the day, the President joined a conference call with Secretary of Labor Thomas E. Perez and journalists to discuss the Trans-Pacific Partnership negotiations and trade promotion authority legislation.

The White House announced that the President will host a White House Tribal Youth Gathering on July 9.

April 27

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Cabinet Room, he participated in an interview with Gerald F. Seib of the Wall Street Journal.

In the afternoon, on the National Mall, the President and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan visited the Lincoln Memorial. Then, he returned to the White House. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with Attorney General Loretta E. Lynch to welcome her to his team. During the meeting, he received an update from Attorney General Lynch on the ongoing situation in Baltimore, MD, following the April 19 death of Freddie C. Gray, Jr., from injuries sustained during his arrest by Baltimore police officers.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Mayor Stephanie C. Rawlings-Blake of Baltimore, MD, to discuss the situation in Baltimore.

In the evening, the President had a telephone conversation with Gov. Lawrence J. Hogan, Jr., of Maryland to discuss the situation in Baltimore.

The White House announced that the President will honor the 2015 National and State Teachers of the Year on April 29.

April 28

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden met with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan.

In the afternoon, the President recorded a telephone interview with radio host Steve Harvey of "The Steve Harvey Morning Show" for later broadcast.

In the evening, on the North Portico, the President and Mrs. Obama welcomed Prime Minister Abe and his wife Akie Abe for a state dinner and reception. Then, on the Grand Staircase, they participated in a photo opportunity with Prime Minister and Mrs. Abe. Later, in the State Dining Room, he and Mrs. Obama hosted an entertainment reception for Prime Minister and Mrs. Abe.

The President announced his intention to nominate Peter V. Neffenger to be Administrator of the Transportation Security Adminis-

tration at the Department of Homeland Security.

The President declared a disaster under the Compact of Free Association between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Federated States of Micronesia, as amended, due to Typhoon Maysak during the period of March 29 through April 1.

April 29

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Sushil Koirala of Nepal to express his condolences for the loss of life in the April 25 earthquake in Nepal, discuss ongoing disaster response and recovery efforts, and pledge U.S. assistance. Later, also in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President walked with 2015 National Teacher of the Year Shanna Peeples to nearby Teaism restaurant, where he purchased lunch and tea. Then, on their way back to the White House, he stopped to talk to a group of schoolchildren who were visiting. Later, in the Private Dining Room, he had lunch with House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi.

Later in the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President signed the 2015 Economic Report of the President. Then, he traveled to Bethesda, MD, where, at the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, he visited with wounded U.S. servicemembers and their families. Later he returned to Washington, DC.

April 30

In the afternoon, in the Cabinet Room, the President met with members of the New Democrat Coalition.

The White House announced that the President will travel to New York City on May 4.

The President announced his intention to nominate Gayle E. Smith to be Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development.

The President announced the nomination of Julie Helene Becker to be a judge on the Superior Court of the District of Columbia.

The President declared a major disaster in Kentucky and ordered Federal aid to supplement Commonwealth and local recovery efforts in the area affected by severe winter storms, snowstorms, flooding, landslides, and mudslides from February 15 through 22.

May 1

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President participated in a video teleconference with mayors of Cities United to discuss the White House "My Brother's Keeper" initiative and the President's Task Force on 21st-Century Policing.

The President announced his intention to appoint W. James McNerney, Jr., and Ann Marie Wilkins as General Trustees on the Board of Trustees of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

The President announced his intention to appoint Russell F. Smith III as a U.S. Commissioner to the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas.

The President announced his intention to appoint Guy "Bud" Tribble as a member of the President's National Security Telecommunications Advisory Committee.

The President announced his intention to nominate Elizabeth A. Copeland to be a judge on the U.S. Tax Court.

The President declared a major disaster in Kentucky and ordered Federal aid to supplement Commonwealth and local recovery efforts in the area affected by severe storms, tornadoes, flooding, landslides, and mudslides from April 2 through 17.

May 2

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Camp David, MD.

May 3

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Joint Base Andrews, MD, where he played a round of golf. Later, he returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the evening.

In the evening, the President was briefed on the shooting at the Curtis Culwell Center in Garland, TX.

May 4

In the morning, the President traveled to New York City.

In the afternoon, at the Ed Sullivan Theater in New York City, the President recorded an interview with David Letterman of CBS's "Late Show With David Letterman" for later broadcast.

In the evening, at a private residence, the President attended a Democratic National Committee roundtable fundraiser. Later, he returned to Washington, DC.

May 5

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Roosevelt Room, the President and Vice President Biden met with President Masoud Barzani of the Kurdistan Regional Government in Iraq to discuss ongoing efforts to combat the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization and reaffirm U.S. support for the Iraqi Kurdistan region and commitment to a united, federal, and democratic Iraq. Then, in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of Defense Ashton B. Carter. Later, he met with members of the Esperanza Azteca Youth Orchestra of Los Angeles, CA, and Puebla, Mexico, prior to their performance at the White House Cinco de Mayo celebration.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with documentary filmmaker Anthony Geffen to discuss the President's upcoming interview with David F. Attenborough of the BBC.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Portland, OR, on May 7.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Watertown, SD, on May 8.

May 6

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President and Vice President Biden had lunch. Later, in the Oval Office, he made separate telephone calls to Stephanie Tarr of Coon Rapids, MN, Dawn Miller of Tucson, AZ, and Patricia Church of Ormond Beach, FL, who had written letters to the President, to wish them a happy Mother's Day. Later, in the Map Room, the President recorded an interview with English broadcaster and naturalist David F. Attenborough of the BBC for later broadcast. Atlantic Productions Chief Executive Officer Anthony Geffen also attended.

The President announced his intention to nominate Karen Bollinger DeSalvo to be Assistant Secretary for Health at the Department of Health and Human Services.

The President announced his intention to nominate Jennifer Zimdahl Galt to be Ambassador to Mongolia.

The President announced his intention to nominate David R. Gilmour to be Ambassador to Togo.

The President announced his intention to nominate James D. Melville, Jr., to be Ambassador to Estonia.

The President announced his intention to nominate Peter F. Mulrean to be Ambassador to Haiti.

The President announced his intention to nominate Edwin R. Nolan, Jr., to be Ambassador to Suriname.

May 7

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Roosevelt Room, he met with White House Fellows.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Portland, OR.

May 8

In the morning, the President traveled to Beaverton, OR, where, in the Jerry Rice Lobby at Nike World Headquarters, he recorded an interview with Matt Bai of Yahoo! News for later online broadcast. Later, he traveled to Watertown, SD, arriving in the afternoon.

In the afternoon, while en route to Watertown aboard Air Force One, the President had

a telephone conversation with Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom to congratulate him on his election victory and discuss United Kingdom-U.S. relations.

In the evening, on the tarmac of Watertown Regional Airport, the President met with 11-year-old Rebecca Kelley of Vermillion, SD, who had written a letter to the President asking him to visit South Dakota, and members of her family. Then, he returned to Washington, DC.

The President announced his intention to nominate Ann Calvaresi Barr to be Inspector General of the U.S. Agency for International Development.

The President announced his intention to nominate Julius Lloyd Horwich to be Assistant Secretary for Legislative and Congressional Affairs at the Department of Education.

The President announced his intention to nominate Gregory G. Nadeau to be Administrator of the Federal Highway Administration at the Department of Transportation.

The President announced his intention to appoint Elizabeth H. Blackburn as a member of the President's Committee on the National Medal of Science.

The President announced his intention to appoint Xavier de Souza Briggs as a member of the Community Development Advisory Board.

The President announced his intention to appoint Jacob J. Fitisemanu, Jr., Sanjita Pradhan, and Paul Y. Watanabe as members of the President's Advisory Commission on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

The President announced his intention to appoint the following individuals as members of the President's Committee for People with Intellectual Disabilities:

Peter V. Berns;
James T. Brett;
Kenneth Capone;
Zachary W. Holler;
Deborah M. Spitalnik; and
Elizabeth Weintraub.

May 11

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with King Salman bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia to discuss the King's regret at not being able to travel to Camp David, MD, to attend the Gulf Cooperation Council meetings and the attendance of Crown Prince Muhammad bin Nayif bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud and Deputy Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud in his place; the importance of reaching a comprehensive agreement between the P5-plus-1 and Iran to ensure the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear program; the situation in Yemen; and Saudi Arabia-U.S. relations.

May 12

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Secretary of Defense Ashton B. Carter. Also in the afternoon, he met with a group of Senate Democrats to discuss trade promotion authority legislation and Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) negotiations.

The President declared a major disaster in Kentucky and ordered Federal aid to supplement Commonwealth and local recovery efforts in the area affected by a severe winter storm, snowstorm, flooding, landslides, and mudslides from March 3 through 9.

May 13

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President and Vice President Biden had lunch. Later, on the South Lawn, he greeted Gulf Cooperation Council leaders and delegations.

In the evening, in the Blue Room, the President hosted a working dinner for Gulf Cooperation Council leaders and delegations. Vice President Biden also attended.

The President announced his intention to nominate Karl B. Brooks to be Assistant Administrator for Administration and Resources Management at the Environmental Protection Agency.

The President announced his intention to nominate Laura Farnsworth Dogu to be Ambassador to Nicaragua.

The President announced his intention to nominate Samuel D. Heins to be Ambassador to Norway.

The President announced his intention to nominate Thomas O. Melia to be Assistant Administrator for Europe and Eurasia at the U.S. Agency for International Development.

The President announced his intention to appoint Fran Ulmer as Chairperson of the Arctic Research Commission.

The President announced his intention to appoint James J. Zogby as a member of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom.

May 14

In the morning, the President traveled to Camp David, MD, where, in the Laurel Cabin conference room, he greeted Gulf Cooperation Council leaders and delegations. Then, also in the Laurel Cabin, he participated in a working session.

In the afternoon, in the Laurel Cabin, the President hosted a lunch for Gulf Cooperation Council leaders and delegations. Later, also in the Laurel Cabin, he participated in a working session with Gulf Cooperation Council leaders and delegations.

Later in the afternoon, the President participated in separate photo opportunities with Gulf Cooperation Council leaders and delegations, followed by a group photograph. Later, in the Laurel Cabin, he participated in a working session. Then, he returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the evening.

The White House announced that the President will present the Medal of Honor posthumously to Sgt. William Shemin, USA, and Pvt. Henry Johnson, USA, for conspicuous gallantry during World War I.

The President declared a major disaster in West Virginia and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by severe storms, flooding, landslides, and mudslides from April 3 through 5.

In the afternoon, in the Map Room, the President recorded an interview with Nadiya Bilbassy-Charters of the Al-Arabiya News Channel for later broadcast.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Camden, NJ, on May 18.

May 17

The White House announced that the President will travel to New London, CT, on May 20.

May 18

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, also in the Oval Office, he participated in a credentialing ceremony for newly appointed Ambassadors. Also in the morning, in the Oval Office, he sent out his first tweet under the handle @POTUS, the official Twitter account of the President of the United States.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Camden, NJ, where, at the Camden County Police Department headquarters, he toured the department's Real-Time Tactical Operations and Information Center and met with local law enforcement officers and youth. Later, at the Salvation Army Ray and Joan Kroc Corps Community Center, he met with local law enforcement officials and youth. Then, he returned to Washington, DC.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Stamford, CT, on May 20.

The President announced the designation of John F. Kerry as leader of a Presidential delegation to attend the Inauguration of Muhammadu Buhari as President of Nigeria in Abuja, Nigeria, on May 29, with other members of the delegation to be announced at a future date.

The President declared a major disaster in West Virginia and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms, flooding, landslides, and mudslides from April 8 through 11.

May 19

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Situation Room, he met with the National Security Council to discuss the situation in Iraq and the

U.S. strategy to counter the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization in Iraq and Syria.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President participated in an interview with Jeffrey Goldberg of the Atlantic magazine. Then, also in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Joe Biden met with Secretary of Defense Ashton B. Carter.

The White House announced that the President will make remarks at the Adas Israel Congregation on May 22.

May 20

In the morning, the President traveled to New London, CT.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Stamford, CT, where, at a private residence, he attended a Democratic National Committee fundraiser.

In the evening, the President returned to Washington, DC.

The President announced his intention to nominate Stephen C. Hedger to be Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs at the Department of Defense.

The President announced his intention to nominate W. Thomas Reeder, Jr., to be Director of the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation.

The President announced his intention to nominate Jessica Rosenworcel to be a Commissioner of the Federal Communications Commission.

The President announced his intention to nominate Luis A. Viada to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Inter-American Foundation.

The President announced his intention to nominate Akhil R. Amar and Robert P. Zimmerman to be members of the National Council on the Humanities.

The President announced his intention to appoint Ronald A. Klain as a member of the Council of the Administrative Conference of the U.S.

The President announced his intention to appoint Gerald S. McGowan as a member of the Board of Visitors to the U.S. Military Academy.

May 21

The President announced his intention to nominate Denise Turner Roth to be Administrator of the General Services Administration.

The President announced the nomination of Edward L. Stanton III to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Tennessee.

The President announced the nomination of Eric S. Miller to be U.S. attorney for the District of Vermont.

The President announced the nomination of Michael C. McGowan to be U.S. marshal for the District of Delaware.

The President declared a major disaster in West Virginia and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms, flooding, landslides, and mudslides from April 13 through 15.

May 22

In the morning, at the Adas Israel Congregation, the President visited a preschool classroom and greeted students and teachers.

In the afternoon, in the East Room, the President and Mrs. Obama hosted a reception for the foreign diplomatic corps.

May 25

In the morning, in the State Dining Room, the President hosted a Memorial Day breakfast. Then, he traveled to Arlington, VA, where, at Arlington National Cemetery, he participated in a wreath-laying ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Later, he returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the afternoon.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Miami, FL, on May 27 and 28.

May 26

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Also in the morning, he had a telephone conversation with Gov. Gregory W. Abbott of Texas to discuss the floods affecting Texas, express his condolences for the loss

of life, and offer Federal assistance in the rescue and recovery efforts.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Biden greeted 97-year-old Vivian Bailey of Columbia, MD, and her guests, Principal Troy Todd and teacher Melissa Peyton of Running Brook Elementary School in Columbia. Ms. Bailey raises money for students at the school to take field trips. Then, in the Private Dining Room, the President and Vice President Biden had lunch. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of Health and Human Services Sylvia Mathews Burwell.

The White House announced further details on the President's awarding of the Medal of Honor posthumously to Sgt. William Shemin, USA, and Pvt. Henry Johnson, USA, on June 2.

The White House announced that the President will welcome President Park Geun-hye of South Korea to the White House on June 16.

The President declared a major disaster in Oklahoma and ordered Federal aid to supplement State, tribal, and local recovery efforts in the area affected by severe storms, tornadoes, straight-line winds, and flooding from May 5 through 10.

May 27

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

Later, the President traveled to Miami, FL, where, at a private residence, he attended a Democratic National Committee roundtable fundraiser.

In the evening, the President traveled to the Hilton Miami Downtown hotel, where he remained overnight.

The President announced the designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential to attend the Inauguration of Muhammadu Buhari as President of Nigeria in Abuja, Nigeria, on May 29:

John F. Kerry (head of delegation);
James F. Entwistle;
Linda Thomas-Greenfield;
David M. Rodriguez;
Grant T. Harris; and
Hakeem Olajuwon.

May 28

In the morning, at the Hilton Miami Downtown hotel in Miami, FL, the President met with Arthur and Shirley Sotloff, parents, and Lauren Sotloff, sister, of Steven J. Sotloff, a freelance journalist who was killed by members of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization in Syria on September 2, 2014. Later, he traveled to the National Hurricane Center, where he toured the facilities with Director Richard Knabb and met with staff members.

In the afternoon, at the National Hurricane Center, the President participated in a Twitter question-and-answer session on climate change. Then, he visited the Shrine of Our Lady of Charity in Miami, where he met with Rector Juan Rumin Dominguez, paid respects to the Cuban American community, and honored their contributions to the U.S. Later, he returned to Washington, DC.

May 29

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Map Room, the President recorded an interview with Ilana Dayan of Israel's Channel 2 television station for later broadcast.

The President announced his intention to nominate Marie Therese Dominguez to be Administrator of the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration at the Department of Transportation.

The President announced his intention to nominate Sarah E. Feinberg to be Administrator of the Federal Railroad Administration at the Department of Transportation.

The President announced his intention to appoint Rebecca Richards-Kortum and Andrew J. Viterbi as members of the President's Committee on the National Medal of Science.

The President declared a major disaster in Texas and ordered Federal aid to supplement State, tribal, and local recovery efforts in the area affected by severe storms, tornadoes, straight-line winds, and flooding beginning on May 4 and continuing.

May 31

In the afternoon, at the U.S. Naval Observatory, the President and Mrs. Obama visited with Vice President Joe Biden, his wife Jill T. Biden, and their family to offer their condolences for the death of Joseph R. "Beau" Biden III, son of Vice President Biden.

The White House announced that the Ford's Theatre Reception had been canceled out of respect for the death of Joseph R. "Beau" Biden III.

June 1

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

The President announced his intention to nominate Roberta S. Jacobson to be Ambassador to Mexico.

The President announced his intention to appoint Cary Fowler as a member of the Board for International Food and Agricultural Development.

The President announced his intention to appoint Marvin E. Johnson and David E. Walker as members of the Federal Service Impasses Panel for the Federal Labor Relations Authority.

The President declared a major disaster in Texas and ordered Federal aid to supplement State, tribal, and local recovery efforts in the area affected by severe storms, tornadoes, straight-line winds, and flooding beginning on May 4 and continuing.

June 2

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

The White House announced that the President will welcome the World Series Champion San Francisco Giants to the White House on June 4.

June 3

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, also in the Oval Office, he recorded an interview with Kai Ryssdal of NPR's "Marketplace" program for later broadcast.

In the afternoon, in the Roosevelt Room, the President participated in separate "Live From the White House" interviews with Karen Borta of KTVT in Dallas, TX, Estela Casas of KVIA in El Paso, TX, Dennis Bounds of KING in Seattle, WA, Edie Lambert of KCRA in Sacramento, CA, and Barbara-Lee Edwards of KFMB in San Diego, CA. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of the Treasury Jacob J. Lew.

June 4

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

The White House announced that the President and Mrs. Obama will travel to Wilmington, DE, on June 6.

The President announced his intention to nominate Scott Allen to be the U.S. Director of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

The President announced his intention to nominate Mary L. Kendall to be Inspector General at the Department of the Interior.

The President announced his intention to appoint Jim M. Ash as a member of the Board for International Food and Agricultural Development.

The President announced his intention to appoint Abba Cohen as a member of the Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad.

June 5

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with President Petro Poroshenko of Ukraine to discuss the situation in eastern Ukraine, the recent assault by Russian-separatist forces near Donetsk, the need for Russia to abide by the terms of the Minsk agreement, and U.S. support for a diplomatic resolution to the conflict. Then, in the Oval Office, he had an intelligence briefing.

The President declared a major disaster in Guam and ordered Federal aid to supplement Territory and local recovery efforts in the area affected by Typhoon Dolphin from May 13 through 16.

June 6

In the morning, the President, Mrs. Obama, their daughters Malia and Sasha, and Mrs.

Obama's mother Marian Robinson traveled to Wilmington, DE.

In the afternoon, they returned to Washington, DC. Later, he traveled to Munich, Germany, arriving the following morning.

June 7

In the morning, upon arrival at Munich Airport, the President signed a guest book and participated in an arrival ceremony. Then, he traveled to the Schloss Elmau resort in Elmau, Germany. Later, he traveled to Krün, Germany, where, at Krün City Hall, he was welcomed by Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany and signed the town guest book.

In the afternoon, the President toured the village with Chancellor Merkel and stopped for a pretzel and a beer with Chancellor Merkel and her husband Joachim Sauer. Then, he and Chancellor Merkel greeted local residents. Later, he returned to the Schloss Elmau resort in Elmau.

Later in the afternoon, in the Second Library of the Old Castle Building, the President met with Chancellor Merkel. Then, in the entrance of the Old Castle Building, he participated in an arrival ceremony for Group of Seven (G–7) leaders with Chancellor Merkel and her husband Joachim Sauer. Later, in the Pavilion Room of the Retreat Building, he attended two G–7 working sessions on strengthening the world economy and trade. Later, he participated in a photo opportunity with G–7 leaders.

In the evening, in the Concert Hall of the Old Castle Building, the President attended a reception and cultural performance with G–7 leaders, their spouses, and other guests. Later, in the Private Dining Room of the Old Castle Building, he participated in a working dinner with G–7 leaders to discuss foreign and security policy. He remained overnight at the Schloss Elmau.

June 8

In the morning, in the Pavilion Room of the Retreat Building, the President participated in a third working session with Group of Seven (G–7) leaders and outreach guests to discuss energy initiatives and climate change. Later, in the Wetterstein Room of the Old Castle Building, he met with President François Hollande of France. Then, in the Fidelio Room of the Old Castle Building, he attended a fourth working session with G–7 leaders and outreach guests.

In the afternoon, in the Inner Courtyard of the Schloss Elmau, the President participated in a photo opportunity with G–7 leaders and outreach guests. Then, in the Fidelio Room of the Old Castle Building, he had a working lunch with G–7 leaders, outreach guests, and summit sherpas to discuss development issues. Later in the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the evening.

The President announced his intention to nominate Carolyn Patricia Alsup to be Ambassador to the Gambia.

The President announced his intention to nominate Paul Wayne Jones to be Ambassador to Poland.

The President announced his intention to nominate Daniel H. Rubinstein to be Ambassador to Tunisia.

The President announced the appointment of Shannon Price Minter as a member of the President's Commission on White House Fellowships.

June 9

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President and Office of Science and Technology Policy Director John P. Holdren met with Sen. C. William Nelson and other alumni of the *Columbia* Space Shuttle missions to discuss developments in astronomy and space exploration.

June 10

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had lunch. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of Defense Ashton B. Carter.

June 11

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Rose Garden, he recorded an interview with Jerry Penacoli of Extra TV for later broadcast.

In the afternoon, at a private residence, the President attended a Democratic National Committee fundraiser.

In the evening, at Nationals Park, the President stopped by the 2015 Congressional Baseball Game for Charity. Also in the evening, the President had a telephone conversation with President Park Geun-hye of South Korea to discuss the postponement of her planned June 6 travel to the U.S., express his condolences for the loss of lives due to the MERS outbreak, and offer U.S. assistance.

The President announced the designation of the individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to attend the 2015 World Expo in Milan, Italy, on June 17 and 18:

Michelle Obama (head of delegation);
John R. Phillips;
Douglas T. Hickey;
Risa J. Lavizzo-Mourey;
Alonzo H. Mourning;
Will Allen;
Mario Batali;
Carla Hall; and
Nicolas Jammet.

The President announced the nomination of Brian R. Martinotti to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the District of New Jersey.

The President announced the nomination of Robert F. Rossiter, Jr., to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the District of Nebraska.

June 12

In the morning, in the Cannon House Office Building, the President met with House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi and Rep. James E. Clyburn to discuss the upcoming votes on trade promotion authority and trade adjustment assistance legislation. Then, in the Gabriel Zimmerman Meeting Room of the Capitol Visitor Center, he dropped by a meeting of members of the House Democratic Caucus to discuss his trade agenda.

In the afternoon, in the Situation Room, the President dropped by a video teleconference with Governors from six Western States to discuss ways to combat wildfires and drought.

The President announced his intention to nominate John E. Morton to be Vice President of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation.

The President announced his intention to appoint Nancy M. Schlichting as Chair of the President's Commision on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors.

The President announced his intention to appoint David W. Gorman and Joyce M. Johnson as members of the President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors.

June 13

In the evening, the President and Mrs. Obama hosted a private party featuring a musical performance by Prince.

June 15

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Speaker of the House of Representatives John A. Boehner to discuss trade promotion authority legislation.

June 16

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President and Vice President Biden had lunch. Later, in the Oval Office, they met with Secretary of Defense Ashton B. Carter.

The White House announced that the President will travel to the Los Angeles, CA, area on June 18.

June 17

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President had a telephone conversation with Head Coach Stephen D. Kerr of the National Basketball Association's Golden State Warriors to congratulate him on his team's victory in the NBA Finals. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with the recipients of the Presidential

Awards for Excellence in Science, Mathematics, and Engineering Mentoring. Then, he met separately with Democratic Members of the Senate and House of Representatives to thank them for their support of trade promotion authority and trade adjustment assistance legislation and reiterate his commitment to working with congressional leaders to pass the legislation.

In the evening, the President was briefed on the shooting at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, SC.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Head Coach Joel Quenneville, Principal Owner and Chairman Rocky Wirtz, and team captain Jonathan Toews of the National Hockey League's Chicago Blackhawks to congratulate them on their team's victory in the Stanley Cup Championship.

The White House announced that the President will travel to San Francisco, CA, on June 19.

June 18

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Then, in the Map Room, he recorded a video message for the White House Summit on Climate Change and Health on June 23. Later, he had separate telephone conversations with Rep. James E. Clyburn, Mayor Joseph P. Riley, Jr., of Charleston, SC, and Minority Leader J. Todd Rutherford of the South Carolina House of Representatives to discuss the June 17 shooting in Charleston and offer his condolences.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Los Angeles, CA. While en route aboard Air Force One, he had separate telephone conversations with Gov. Nikki R. Haley and Sens. Lindsey O. Graham and Timothy E. Scott of South Carolina to discuss the June 17 shooting in Charleston, SC, and offer his condolences. Upon arrival in Los Angeles, he traveled to a private residence, where he participated in a Democratic National Committee roundtable fundraiser.

The President announced his intention to nominate Julie Furuta-Toy to be Ambassador to Equatorial Guinea.

The President announced his intention to appoint the following individuals as members of the National Cancer Advisory Board:

Peter C. Adamson;
Deborah Watkins Bruner;
Yuan Chang;
Timothy J. Ley; and
Max S. Wicha.

June 19

In the morning, the President traveled to the residence of comedian Marc Maron, where he recorded an interview for the "WTF With Marc Maron" podcast to be released on June 22. Later, he traveled to San Francisco, CA, arriving in the afternoon.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to the Hilton San Francisco Union Square hotel, where he met with Gov. Edmund G. "Jerry" Brown, Jr., of California to discuss the Federal, State, and local response to the drought and wildfires affecting California and thank Gov. Brown for his leadership in international efforts to combat climate change. Later, at a private residence, he participated in a Democratic National Committee roundtable fundraiser.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Ethiopia in late July.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Palm Springs, CA, on June 20 and 21.

June 20

In the morning, the President traveled to Rancho Mirage, CA.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to a private residence in the Thunderbird Heights neighborhood, where he remained overnight.

June 21

In the morning, the President traveled to the Porcupine Creek Golf Course.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the evening.

June 22

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

The White House announced that the President and Vice President Joe Biden will travel to Charleston, SC, on June 26.

June 23

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had lunch.

June 24

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Then, he had a telephone conversation with President François Hollande of France to discuss U.S. electronic surveillance and intelligence-gathering programs and France-U.S. relations.

In the afternoon, in the Cabinet Room, the President met with Vice Premier Liu Yandong, Vice Premier Wang Yang, State Councilor Yang Jiechi, and other special representatives to the U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue and Consultation on People-to-People Exchange. Later, in the Blue Room, he visited with James Obergefell, plaintiff in the U.S. Supreme Court case *Obergefell* v. *Hodges*, who was attending the White House Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Pride Month Reception in the East Room.

The White House announced that the President, Mrs. Obama, and Vice President Biden and his wife Jill T. Biden will travel to Charleston, SC, on June 26

June 25

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. During the briefing, also in the Oval Office, he was informed by White House Counsel W. Neil Eggleston, Chief of Staff Denis R. McDonough, and Deputy Chief of Staff Kristie A. Canegallo of the Supreme Court's decision to uphold key provisions of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. Then, he had a telephone conversation with U.S. Solicitor General Donald B. Verrilli, Jr., to congratulate him on the Supreme Court's favorable rulings in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act and housing discrimination cases.

In the evening, in the Usher's Office, the President met with Director of Speechwriting Cody S. Keenan to discuss the eulogy he would deliver at the funeral service for Pastor Clementa C. Pinckney of the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, SC, on June 26.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia to discuss efforts to counter the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization, ongoing international negotiations to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon, and the situations in Ukraine and Syria.

The White House announced that the President will welcome President Muhammadu Buhari of Nigeria to the White House on July 20.

The President declared a major disaster in Nebraska and ordered Federal aid to supplement State, tribal, and local recovery efforts in the area affected by severe storms, tornadoes, straight-line winds, and flooding from May 6 through June 17.

June 26

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he had a telephone conversation with James Obergefell, plaintiff in the U.S. Supreme Court case *Obergefell* v. *Hodges*, to congratulate him on the Court's ruling in favor of marriage equality for same-sex couples. Then, he and Mrs. Obama traveled to Charleston, SC, arriving in the afternoon.

In the afternoon, following the funeral service for Pastor Clementa C. Pinckney at the TD Arena of the College of Charleston, the President, Mrs. Obama, and Vice President Joe Biden and his wife Jill T. Biden met with families of the victims of the June 17 shooting at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston. Later, he and Mrs.

Obama returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the evening.

The President announced his intention to nominate Mark Cohen to be a member of the Merit Systems Protection Board and, upon appointment, to designate him Vice Chairman.

The President announced his intention to nominate G. Kathleen Hill to be Ambassador to Malta.

The President announced his intention to appoint the following individuals as members of the Board of Directors of the Presidio Trust:

Lynne Benioff;
Paula Robinson Collins;
Nicola Miner; and
Janet Reilly.

The President announced his intention to appoint Eric Ortner as a member of the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities.

The President announced his intention to appoint Shervin Pishevar as a member of the J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board.

The President announced his intention to appoint Steven Spinner as a member of the President's Commission on White House Fellowships.

The President declared a major disaster in Arkansas and ordered Federal aid to supplement State, tribal, and local recovery efforts in the area affected by severe storms, tornadoes, straight-line winds, and flooding from May 7 through June 15.

June 28

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany to discuss the fiscal situation in Greece and express his condolences for the deaths of the German citizens killed in a terrorist attack at a beach resort in Sousse, Tunisia, on June 26.

June 29

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with President François Hollande of France to discuss the economic situation in Greece and express his condolences for the loss of life and injuries resulting from the terrorist attack at the Air Products gas factory in Saint-Quentin-Fallavier near Lyon, France, on June 26.

In the afternoon, the President had a telephone conversation with President Beji Caid Essebsi of Tunisia to offer his condolences for the loss of life resulting from the terrorist attack on a beach resort in Souse, Tunisia, on June 26 and reaffirm U.S. cooperation on counterterrorism efforts and broader security issues. Later, on the National Mall, he visited the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial with President Dilma Rousseff of Brazil.

In the evening, in the Blue Room, the President had a working dinner with President Rousseff. Vice President Joe Biden also attended.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom to express his condolences for the loss of life in the June 26 terrorist attack on a beach resort in Sousse, Tunisia, offer his support in confronting global terrorism, and discuss the need for structural economic reforms in Greece.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Nashville, TN, on July 1.

The White House announced that the President will travel to La Crosse, WI, on July 2.

June 30

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden met with President Dilma Rousseff of Brazil.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President participated in a teleconference call with elected officials and business and labor groups to discuss the reauthorization of the Export-Import Bank of the U.S. Later, also in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of Defense Ashton B. Carter.

Appendix B—Nominations Submitted to the Senate

The following list does not include promotions of members of the Uniformed Services, nominations to the Service Academies, or nominations of Foreign Service officers.

Submitted January 7

Alfred H. Bennett,
of Texas, to be U.S. District Judge for the Southern District of Texas, vice Kenneth M. Hoyt, retired.

Armando Omar Bonilla,
of the District of Columbia, to be a Judge of the U.S. Court of Federal Claims for a term of 15 years, vice Edward J. Damich, term expired.

Jeanne E. Davidson,
of Maryland, to be a Judge of the U.S. Court of International Trade, vice Donald C. Pogue, retired.

Ann Donnelly,
of New York, to be U.S. District Judge for the Eastern District of New York, vice Sandra L. Townes, retiring.

Dale A. Drozd,
of California, to be U.S. District Judge for the Eastern District of California, vice Anthony W. Ishii, retired.

Nancy B. Firestone,
of Virginia, to be a Judge of the U.S. Court of Federal Claims for a term of 15 years (reappointment).

Michael Greco,
of New York, to be U.S. Marshal for the Southern District of New York for the term of 4 years, vice Joseph R. Guccione, term expired.

Thomas L. Halkowski,
of Pennsylvania, to be a Judge of the U.S. Court of Federal Claims for a term of 15 years, vice Lynn Jeanne Bush, term expired.

LaShann Moutique DeArcy Hall,
of New York, to be U.S. District Judge for the Eastern District of New York, vice Nicholas G. Garaufis, retired.

George C. Hanks, Jr.,
of Texas, to be U.S. District Judge for the Southern District of Texas, vice Nancy Friedman Atlas, retired.

Roseann A. Ketchmark,
of Missouri, to be U.S. District Judge for the Western District of Missouri, vice Gary A. Fenner, retiring.

Patricia M. McCarthy,
of Maryland, to be a Judge of the U.S. Court of Federal Claims for a term of 15 years, vice Emily Clark Hewitt, retired.

Travis Randall McDonough,
of Tennessee, to be U.S. District Judge for the Eastern District of Tennessee, vice Curtis L. Collier, retired.

Ronald Lee Miller,
of Kansas, to be U.S. Marshal for the District of Kansas for the term of 4 years, vice Walter Robert Bradley, retired.

Jose Rolando Olvera, Jr.,
of Texas, to be U.S. District Judge for the Southern District of Texas, vice Hilda G. Tagle, retired.

Jill N. Parrish,
of Utah, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of Utah, vice Dee V. Benson, retired.

Luis Felipe Restrepo,
of Pennsylvania, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Third Circuit, vice Anthony J. Scirica, retired.

Jeri Kaylene Somers,
of Virginia, to be a Judge of the U.S. Court of Federal Claims for a term of 15 years, vice George W. Miller, retired.

Kara Farnandez Stoll,
of Virginia, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Federal Circuit, vice Randall R. Rader, retired.

Ashton B. Carter,
of Massachusetts, to be Secretary of Defense, vice Charles Timothy Hagel.

Allan R. Landon,
of Utah, to be a member of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System for the unexpired term of 4 years from February 1, 2002, vice Sarah Bloom Raskin, resigned.

Allan R. Landon,
of Utah, to be a member of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System for the term of 4 years from February 1, 2016 (reappointment).

Loretta E. Lynch,
of New York, to be Attorney General, vice Eric H. Holder, Jr.

Submitted January 8

Walter A. Barrows,
of Ohio, to be a member of the Railroad Retirement Board for a term expiring August 28, 2019 (reappointment).

Allison Beck,
of the District of Columbia, to be Federal Mediation and Conciliation Director, vice George H. Cohen, resigned.

Michele Thoren Bond,
of the District of Columbia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (Consular Affairs), vice Janice L. Jacobs, resigned.

Michael P. Botticelli,
of the District of Columbia, to be Director of National Drug Control Policy, vice R. Gil Kerlikowske, resigned.

Jonodev Osceola Chaudhuri,
of Arizona, to be Chairman of the National Indian Gaming Commission for the term of 3 years, vice Tracie Stevens.

Gilberto de Jesus,
of Maryland, to be Chief Counsel for Advocacy, Small Business Administration, vice Winslow Lorenzo Sargeant.

Russell C. Deyo,
of New Jersey, to be Under Secretary for Management, Department of Homeland Security, vice Rafael Borras, resigned.

Tho Dinh-Zarr,
of Texas, to be a member of the National Transportation Safety Board for the remainder of the term expiring December 31, 2018, vice Deborah Hersman, resigned.

Romonia S. Dixon,
of Arizona, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Corporation for National and Community Service for a term expiring October 6, 2018, vice Matthew Francis McCabe, term expired.

Todd A. Fisher,
of New York, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation for a term expiring December 17, 2016, vice James A. Torrey, term expired.

Paul A. Folmsbee,
of Oklahoma, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Mali.

Earl L. Gay,
of the District of Columbia, to be Deputy Director of the Office of Personnel Management, vice Christine M. Griffin.

Jeffery S. Hall,
of Kentucky, to be a member of the Farm Credit Administration Board, Farm Credit Administration, for a term expiring October 13, 2018, vice Leland A. Strom, term expired.

Jennifer Ann Haverkamp,
of Indiana, to be Assistant Secretary of State for Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, vice Kerri-Ann Jones, resigned.

Victoria Ann Hughes,
of Virginia, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Corporation for National and Community Service for a term expiring October 6, 2016, vice James Palmer, term expired.

Adri Davin Jayaratne,
of Michigan, to be an Assistant Secretary of Labor, vice Brian Vincent Kennedy.

David Avren Jones,
of Connecticut, to be a member of the Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board for a term expiring October 11, 2018 (reappointment).

Mary Lucille Jordan,
of Maryland, to be a member of the Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commission for a term of 6 years expiring August 30, 2020 (reappointment).

Michael D. Kennedy,
of Georgia, to be a member of the Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board for a term expiring September 25, 2018 (reappointment).

Marisa Lago,
of New York, to be a Deputy U.S. Trade Representative, with the rank of Ambassador, vice Miriam E. Sapiro, resigned.

Michelle K. Lee,
of California, to be Under Secretary of Commerce for Intellectual Property and Director of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, vice David J. Kappos, resigned.

Eric P. Liu,
of Washington, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Corporation for National and Community Service for a term expiring December 27, 2017, vice Layshae Ward, term expired.

Rafael J. López,
of California, to be Commissioner on Children, Youth, and Families, Department of Health and Human Services, vice Bryan Hayes Samuels, resigned.

Daniel Henry Marti,
of Virginia, to be Intellectual Property Enforcement Coordinator, Executive Office of the President, vice Victoria Angelica Espinel, resigned.

Therese W. McMillan,
of California, to be Federal Transit Administrator, vice Peter M. Rogoff, resigned.

Dava J. Newman,
of Massachusetts, to be Deputy Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, vice Lori Garver, resigned.

Deven J. Parekh,
of New York, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation for a term expiring December 17, 2016, vice Katherine M. Gehl, resigned.

Azita Raji,
of California, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Kingdom of Sweden.

Mark Scarano,
of New Hampshire, to be Federal Cochairperson of the Northern Border Regional Commission, vice Sandford Blitz, resigned.

David S. Shapira,
of Pennsylvania, to be a Governor of the U.S. Postal Service for a term expiring December 8, 2019, vice Dennis J. Toner, term expired.

Carlos J. Torres,
of Virginia, to be Deputy Director of the Peace Corps, vice Carolyn Hessler Radelet, resigned.

Michael Young,
of Pennsylvania, to be a member of the Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commission for a term of 6 years expiring August 30, 2020 (reappointment).

Patricia D. Cahill,
of Missouri, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting for a term expiring January 31, 2020 (reappointment).

Walter Hood,
of California, to be a member of the National Council on the Arts for a term expiring September 3, 2020, vice Barbara Ernst Prey, term expired.

Kristen Marie Kulinowski,
of New York, to be a member of the Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board for a term of 5 years, vice Beth J. Rosenberg, resigned.

Diane Helen Rodriguez,
of California, to be a member of the National Council on the Arts for a term expiring September 3, 2018, vice Joan Israelite, term expired.

Kristen Joan Sarri,
of Michigan, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Interior, vice Rhea S. Suh, resigned.

Sally Quillian Yates,
of Georgia, to be Deputy Attorney General, vice James Michael Cole, resigning.

Submitted January 13

Mario Cordero,
of California, to be a Federal Maritime Commissioner for the term expiring June 30, 2019 (reappointment).

Daniel R. Elliott, III,
of Ohio, to be a member of the Surface Transportation Board for a term expiring December 31, 2018 (reappointment).

Jay Neal Lerner,
of Illinois, to be Inspector General, Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, vice Jon T. Rymer, resigned.

Carlos A. Monje, Jr.,
of Louisiana, to be an Assistant Secretary of Transportation, vice Polly Trottenberg, resigned.

Alissa M. Starzak,
of New York, to be General Counsel of the Department of the Army, vice Brad Carson, resigned.

Submitted January 16

Adewale Adeyemo,
of California, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, vice Marisa Lago.

Brian James Egan,
of Maryland, to be Legal Adviser of the Department of State, vice Harold Hongju Koh, resigned.

Matthew T. McGuire,
of the District of Columbia, to be U.S. Executive Director of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development for a term of 2 years, vice Ian Hoddy Solomon, term expired.

John E. Mendez,
of California, to be a Director of the Securities Investor Protection Corporation for a term expiring December 31, 2015, vice Sharon Y. Bowen, resigned.

John E. Mendez,
of California, to be a Director of the Securities Investor Protection Corporation for a term expiring December 31, 2018 (reappointment).

Submitted January 26

Sim Farar,
of California, to be a member of the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy for a term expiring July 1, 2015 (reappointment).

Sim Farar,
of California, to be a member of the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy for a term expiring July 1, 2018 (reappointment).

William Joseph Hybl,
of Colorado, to be a member of the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy for a term expiring July 1, 2015 (reappointment).

William Joseph Hybl,
of Colorado, to be a member of the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy for a term expiring July 1, 2018 (reappointment).

Dallas P. Tonsager,
of South Dakota, to be a member of the Farm Credit Administration Board, Farm Credit Administration, for a term expiring May 21, 2020, vice Jill Long Thompson, term expired.

Submitted January 27

Stuart F. Delery,
of the District of Columbia, to be Associate Attorney General, vice Derek Anthony West, resigned.

Richard T. Julius,
of North Carolina, to be a member of the Internal Revenue Service Oversight Board for a term expiring September 14, 2019, vice Raymond T. Wagner, Jr., term expired.

Albert Stanley Meiburg,
of Georgia, to be Deputy Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, vice Robert Perciasepe, retired.

Submitted January 29

Manson K. Brown,
of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Commerce, vice Kathryn D. Sullivan, resigned.

William P. Doyle,
of Pennsylvania, to be a Federal Maritime Commissioner for a term expiring June 30, 2018 (reappointment).

Gentry O. Smith,
of North Carolina, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Director of the Office of Foreign Missions, and to have the rank of Ambassador during his tenure of service, vice Eric J. Boswell, resigned.

Janet L. Yellen,
of California, to be U.S. Alternate Governor of the International Monetary Fund for a term of 5 years, vice Ben S. Bernanke, term expired.

Submitted February 4

Waverly D. Crenshaw, Jr.,
of Tennessee, to be U.S. District Judge for the Middle District of Tennessee, vice William Joseph Haynes, Jr., retired.

Eileen Maura Decker,
of California, to be U.S. Attorney for the Central District of California for the term of 4 years, vice Andre Birotte, Jr., resigned.

John W. Huber,
of Utah, to be U.S. Attorney for the District of Utah for the term of 4 years, vice David B. Barlow, resigned.

Lawrence Joseph Vilardo,
of New York, to be U.S. District Judge for the Western District of New York, vice Richard J. Arcara, retired.

Submitted February 5

Cassandra Q. Butts,
of the District of Columbia, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Commonwealth of The Bahamas.

Maria Cancian,
of Wisconsin, to be Assistant Secretary for Family Support, Department of Health and Human Services, vice Carmen R. Nazario.

Stafford Fitzgerald Haney,
of New Jersey, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Costa Rica.

Christopher A. Hart,
of Colorado, to be Chairman of the National Transportation Safety Board for a term of 2 years, vice Deborah A. P. Hersman, resigned.

Nancy Bikoff Pettit,
of Virginia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Latvia.

Jessie Hill Roberson,
of Alabama, to be a member of the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board for a term expiring October 18, 2018 (reappointment).

Submitted February 12

Charles C. Adams, Jr.,
of Maryland, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Finland.

David Michael Bennett,
of North Carolina, to be a Governor of the U.S. Postal Service for a term expiring December 8, 2018, vice Thurgood Marshall, Jr., term expired.

Seth B. Carpenter,
of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, vice Matthew S. Rutherford, resigned.

Ann Elizabeth Dunkin,
of California, to be an Assistant Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, vice Malcolm D. Jackson, resigned.

Brodi L. Fontenot,
of Louisiana, to be Chief Financial Officer, Department of the Treasury, vice Daniel M. Tangherlini, resigned.

Sarah Elizabeth Mendelson,
of the District of Columbia, to be Representative of the United States of America on the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, with the rank of Ambassador.

Sarah Elizabeth Mendelson,
of the District of Columbia, to be an Alternate Representative of the United States of America to the Sessions of the General Assembly of the United Nations, during her tenure of service as Representative of the United States of America on the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.

Jane Toshiko Nishida,
of Maryland, to be an Assistant Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, vice Michelle DePass, resigned.

Mary Catherine Phee,
of Illinois, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of South Sudan.

Deborah Willis,
of New York, to be a member of the National Council on the Humanities for a term expiring January 26, 2020, vice Carol M. Swain, term expired.

Submitted February 25

Mickey D. Barnett,
of New Mexico, to be a Governor of the U.S. Postal Service for a term expiring December 8, 2020 (reappointment).

Katherine Simonds Dhanani,
of Florida, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Federal Republic of Somalia.

Amias Moore Gerety,
of Connecticut, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, vice Cyrus Amir-Mokri, resigned.

Sheila Gwaltney,
of California, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Kyrgyz Republic.

Willie E. May,
of Maryland, to be Under Secretary of Commerce for Standards and Technology, vice Patrick Gallagher, resigned.

Cono R. Namorato,
of Virginia, to be an Assistant Attorney General, vice Kathryn Keneally, resigned.

Monica C. Regalbuto,
of Illinois, to be an Assistant Secretary of Energy (Environmental Management), vice Ines R. Triay, resigned.

Anne Elizabeth Wall,
of Illinois, to be a Deputy Under Secretary of the Treasury, vice Alastair M. Fitzpayne, resigned.

Submitted February 26

Mary Barzee Flores,
of Florida, to be U.S. District Judge for the Southern District of Florida, vice Robin S. Rosenbaum, elevated.

Julien Xavier Neals,
of New Jersey, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of New Jersey, vice Faith S. Hochberg, retiring.

Andrew LaMont Eanes,
of Kansas, to be Deputy Commissioner of Social Security for the term expiring January 19, 2019, vice Carolyn W. Colvin, term expired.

Mileydi Guilarte,
of the District of Columbia, to be U.S. Alternate Executive Director of the Inter-American Development Bank, vice Jan E. Boyer, resigned.

Suzette M. Kimball,
of West Virginia, to be Director of the U.S. Geological Survey, vice Marcia K. McNutt, resigned.

Marcia Denise Occomy,
of the District of Columbia, to be U.S. Director of the African Development Bank for a term of five years, vice Walter Crawford Jones, resigned.

Submitted March 4

John Conger,
of Maryland, to be a Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense, vice Michael J. McCord, resigned.

Gregory T. Delawie,
of Virginia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Kosovo.

Perry L. Holloway,
of South Carolina, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Co-operative Republic of Guyana.

Peter Levine,
of Maryland, to be Deputy Chief Management Officer of the Department of Defense, vice Elizabeth A. McGrath.

Ericka M. Miller,
of Virginia, to be Assistant Secretary for Postsecondary Education, Department of Education, vice Eduardo M. Ochoa.

Sunil Sabharwal,
of California, to be U.S. Alternate Executive Director of the International Monetary Fund for a term of 2 years, vice Douglas A. Rediker, resigned.

Mark Sobel,
of Virginia, to be U.S. Executive Director of the International Monetary Fund for a term of 2 years, vice Margrethe Lundsager, resigned.

Michael Keith Yudin,
of the District of Columbia, to be Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Department of Education, vice Alexa E. Posny.

Withdrawn March 4

Gilberto de Jesus,
of Maryland, to be Chief Counsel for Advocacy, Small Business Administration, vice Winslow Lorenzo Sargeant, which was sent to the Senate on January 8, 2015.

Submitted March 11

Edward L. Ayers,
of Virginia, to be a member of the National Council on the Humanities for a term expiring January 26, 2020, vice David Hertz, term expired.

Stephen Crawford,
of Maryland, to be a Governor of the U.S. Postal Service for the remainder of the term expiring December 8, 2015, vice Alan C. Kessler, resigned.

Stephen Crawford,
of Maryland, to be a Governor of the U.S. Postal Service for a term expiring December 8, 2022 (reappointment).

David Hale,
of New Jersey, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

Kathryn K. Matthew,
of South Carolina, to be Director of the Institute of Museum and Library Services for a term of 4 years, vice Susan H. Hildreth.

James C. Miller, III,
of Virginia, to be a Governor of the U.S. Postal Service for a term expiring December 8, 2017 (reappointment).

Carol Fortine Ochoa,
of Virginia, to be Inspector General, General Services Administration, vice Brian David Miller, resigned.

Eric Martin Satz,
of Tennessee, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Valley Authority for a term expiring May 18, 2018, vice Neil G. McBride, term expired.

Vanessa Lorraine Allen Sutherland,
of Virginia, to be a member of the Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board for a term of 5 years, vice Rafael Moure-Eraso, term expiring.

Vanessa Lorraine Allen Sutherland,
of Virginia, to be Chairperson of the Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board for a term of 5 years, vice Rafael Moure-Eraso, term expiring.

Submitted March 16

Ian C. Kelly,
of Illinois, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Georgia.

Patricia M. Loui-Schmicker,
of Hawaii, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Export-Import Bank of the U.S. for a term expiring January 20, 2019 (reappointment).

Submitted March 19

Francine Berman,
of New York, to be a member of the National Council on the Humanities for a term expiring January 26, 2020, vice Gary D. Glenn, term expired.

Richard Christman,
of Kentucky, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Corporation for National and Community Service for a term expiring October 6, 2017 (reappointment).

LaVerne Horton Council,
of New Jersey, to be an Assistant Secretary of Veterans Affairs (Information and Technology), vice Roger W. Baker.

Juan M. Garcia III,
of Texas, to be an Assistant Secretary of Defense, vice Jessica Lynn Wright, resigned.

Douglas J. Kramer,
of Kansas, to be Deputy Administrator of the Small Business Administration, vice Marie Collins Johns, resigned.

Shelly Colleen Lowe,
of Arizona, to be a member of the National Council on the Humanities for a term expiring January 26, 2018, vice Jane M. Doggett, term expired.

Andrew J. Read,
of North Carolina, to be a member of the Marine Mammal Commission for a term expiring May 13, 2016, vice Daryl J. Boness, term expired.

David J. Shulkin,
of Pennsylvania, to be Under Secretary for Health of the Department of Veterans Affairs, vice Robert A. Petzel, resigned.

Stephen P. Welby,
of Maryland, to be an Assistant Secretary of Defense, vice Zachary J. Lemnios, resigned.

Submitted March 25

Kathleen Ann Doherty,
of New York, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Cyprus.

Hans G. Klemm,
of Michigan, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Romania.

Jeffrey Michael Prieto,
of California, to be General Counsel of the Department of Agriculture, vice Ramona Emilia Romero, resigned.

Lucy Tamlyn,
of New York, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Benin.

Submitted March 26

Thomas A. Burke,
of Maryland, to be an Assistant Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, vice Paul T. Anastas, resigned.

Atul Keshap,
of Virginia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, and to serve concurrently and without additional compensation as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Maldives.

Julieta Valls Noyes,
of Virginia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Croatia.

Franklin R. Parker,
of Illinois, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Navy, vice Juan M. Garcia III.

Alaina B. Teplitz,
of Illinois, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal.

John Michael Vazquez,
of New Jersey, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of New Jersey, vice Joal A. Pisano, retired.

Paula Xinis,
of Maryland, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of Maryland, vice Deborah K. Chasanow, retired.

Submitted April 13

Gabriel Camarillo,
of Texas, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Air Force, vice Daniel Ginsberg.

Joyce Louise Connery,
of Massachusetts, to be a member of the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board for a term expiring October 18, 2019, vice Peter Stanley Winokur, resigned.

Jonathan Elkind,
of Maryland, to be an Assistant Secretary of Energy (International Affairs), vice David B. Sandalow, resigned.

Joseph Bruce Hamilton,
of Texas, to be a member of the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board for the remainder of the term expiring October 18, 2016, vice Kenneth L. Mossman.

William A. Heidt,
of Pennsylvania, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Kingdom of Cambodia.

Dean A. Reuter,
of Virginia, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Corporation for National and Community Service for a term expiring September 14, 2016, vice Julie Fisher Cummings, term expired.

David Malcolm Robinson,
of Connecticut, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization, vice Frederick D. Barton, resigned.

David Malcolm Robinson,
of Connecticut, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (Conflict and Stabilization Operations), vice Frederick D. Barton, resigned.

Shamina Singh,
of New York, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Corporation for National and Community Service for a term expiring October 6, 2019, vice Alan D. Solomont, resigned.

Submitted April 14

Glyn T. Davies,
of the District of Columbia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Kingdom of Thailand.

Carol Waller Pope,
of the District of Columbia, to be a member of the Federal Labor Relations Authority for a term of 5 years expiring July 1, 2019 (reappointment).

Submitted April 15

Wilhelmina Marie Wright,
of Minnesota, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of Minnesota, vice Michael J. Davis, retiring.

Linda Struyk Millsaps,
of North Carolina, to be a member of the Internal Revenue Service Oversight Board for a term expiring September 14, 2018, vice Paul Jones, term expired.

Thomas Edgar Rothman,
of Maryland, to be a member of the National Council on the Arts for a term expiring September 3, 2016 (new position).

Submitted April 20

Jeffrey J. Hawkins, Jr.,
of California, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Central African Republic.

Adam J. Szubin,
of the District of Columbia, to be Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Crimes, vice David S. Cohen, resigned.

Submitted April 28

Peter V. Neffenger,
of Ohio, to be an Assistant Secretary of Homeland Security, vice John S. Pistole, resigned.

Submitted April 30

Patricia Nelson Limerick,
of Colorado, to be a member of the National Council on the Humanities for a term expiring January 26, 2018, vice Robert S. Martin, term expired.

Gayle Smith,
of Ohio, to be Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development, vice Rajiv J. Shah, resigned.

Julie Helene Becker,
of the District of Columbia, to be an Associate Judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia for the term of 15 years, vice Herbert Blalock Dixon, Jr., retired.

Todd Sunhwae Kim,
of the District of Columbia, to be an Associate Judge of the District of Columbia Court of Appeals for the term of 15 years, vice Kathryn A. Oberly, retired.

William Ward Nooter,
of the District of Columbia, to be an Associate Judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia for the term of 15 years, vice A. Franklin Burgess, retired.

Robert A. Salerno,
of the District of Columbia, to be an Associate Judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia for the term of 15 years, vice Robert Isaac Richter, retired.

Steven M. Wellner,
of the District of Columbia, to be an Associate Judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia for the term of 15 years, vice Kaye K. Christian, retired.

Submitted May 4

Elizabeth Ann Copeland,
of Texas, to be a judge of the U.S. Tax Court for a term of 15 years, vice Diane L. Kroupa, retired.

Submitted May 7

Karen Bollinger DeSalvo,
of Louisiana, to be an Assistant Secretary of Health and Human Services, vice Howard K. Koh, resigned.

Jennifer Zimdahl Galt,
of Colorado, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Mongolia.

David R. Gilmour,
of Texas, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Togolese Republic.

James Desmond Melville, Jr.,
of New Jersey, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Estonia.

Peter F. Mulrean,
of Massachusetts, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Haiti.

Edwin Richard Nolan, Jr.,
of Massachusetts, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Suriname.

Withdrawn May 7

Juan M. Garcia III,
of Texas, to be an Assistant Secretary of Defense, vice Jessica Lynn Wright, resigned, which was sent to the Senate on March 19, 2015.

Submitted May 11

Ann Calvaresi Barr,
of Maryland, to be Inspector General, U.S. Agency for International Development, vice Donald A. Gambatesa, resigned.

Julius Lloyd Horwich,
of Illinois, to be Assistant Secretary for Legislation and Congressional Affairs, Department of Education, vice Gabriella Cecilia Gomez.

Gregory Guy Nadeau,
of Maine, to be Administrator of the Federal Highway Administration, vice Victor M. Mendez, resigned.

Withdrawn May 11

Katherine Simonds Dhanani,
of Florida, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Federal Republic of Somalia, which was sent to the Senate on February 25, 2015.

Submitted May 14

Leslie E. Bains,
of New York, to be a Director of the Securities Investor Protection Corporation for a term expiring December 31, 2015, vice William S. Jasien, term expired.

Leslie E. Bains,
of New York, to be a Director of the Securities Investor Protection Corporation for a term expiring December 31, 2018 (reappointment).

Karl Boyd Brooks,
of Kansas, to be an Assistant Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, vice Craig E. Hooks, resigned.

Laura Farnsworth Dogu,
of Texas, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Nicaragua.

John L. Estrada,
of Florida, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

Samuel D. Heins,
of Minnesota, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Kingdom of Norway.

Juan Carlos Iturregui,
of Maryland, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Inter-American Foundation for a term expiring June 26, 2020, vice Thomas Joseph Dodd, term expired.

Thomas O. Melia,
of Maryland, to be an Assistant Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development, vice Paige Éve Alexander, resigned.

Submitted May 21

Michael C. McGowan,
of Delaware, to be U.S. Marshal for the District of Delaware for the term of 4 years, vice Joseph Anthony Papili, resigned.

Eric Steven Miller,
of Vermont, to be U.S. Attorney for the District of Vermont for the term of 4 years, vice Tristram J. Coffin, resigned.

Edward L. Stanton III,
of Tennessee, to be U.S. District Judge for the Western District of Tennessee, vice Samuel H. Mays, Jr., retiring.

Akhil Reed Amar,
of Connecticut, to be a member of the National Council on the Humanities for a term expiring January 26, 2020, vice Jamsheed K. Choksy, term expired.

Stephen C. Hedger,
of New York, to be an Assistant Secretary of Defense, vice Elizabeth Lee King, resigned.

W. Thomas Reeder, Jr.,
of Virginia, to be Director of the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation, vice Joshua Gotbaum, resigned.

Jessica Rosenworcel,
of the District of Columbia, to be a member of the Federal Communications Commission for a term of 5 years from July 1, 2015 (reappointment).

Denise Turner Roth,
of North Carolina, to be Administrator of General Services, vice Daniel M. Tangherlini, resigned.

Luis A. Viada,
of New York, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Inter-American Foundation for a term expiring September 20, 2018, vice John P. Salazar, term expired.

Robert P. Zimmerman,
of New York, to be a member of the National Council on the Humanities for a term expiring January 26, 2018, vice Manfredi Piccolomini, resigned.

Submitted June 2

Marie Therese Dominguez,
of Virginia, to be Administrator of the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, Department of Transportation, vice Cynthia L. Quarterman, resigned.

Sarah Elizabeth Feinberg,
of West Virginia, to be Administrator of the Federal Railroad Administration, vice Joseph C. Szabo, resigned.

Roberta S. Jacobson,
of Maryland, a career member of the Senior Executive Service, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the United Mexican States.

Submitted June 8

Scott Allen,
of Maryland, to be U.S. Director of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, vice James LaGarde Hudson, resigned.

Mary L. Kendall,
of Minnesota, to be Inspector General, Department of the Interior, vice Earl E. Devaney, resigned.

Withdrawn June 8

Ericka M. Miller,
of Virginia, to be Assistant Secretary for Postsecondary Education, Department of Education, vice Eduardo M. Ochoa, which was sent to the Senate on March 4, 2015.

Submitted June 10

Carolyn Patricia Alsup,
of Florida, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of The Gambia.

Paul Wayne Jones,
of Maryland, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Career Minister, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Poland.

Daniel H. Rubinstein,
of Virginia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Tunisia.

Submitted June 11

Brian R. Martinotti,
of New Jersey, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of New Jersey, vice Stanley R. Chesler, retiring.

Robert F. Rossiter, Jr.,
of Nebraska, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of Nebraska, vice Joseph F. Bataillon, retired.

Submitted June 16

John Morton,
of Massachusetts, to be Executive Vice President of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation, vice Mimi E. Alemayehou.

Linda Thomas-Greenfield,
an Assistant Secretary of State (African Affairs), to be a member of the Board of Directors of the African Development Foundation for the remainder of the term expiring September 27, 2015, vice Johnnie Carson.

Linda Thomas-Greenfield,
an Assistant Secretary of State (African Affairs), to be a member of the Board of Directors of the African Development Foundation for a term expiring September 27, 2021 (reappointment).

Submitted June 22

Julie Furuta-Toy,
of Wyoming, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Equatorial Guinea.

Submitted June 24

Kenneth J. Kopocis,
of Virginia, to be an Assistant Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, vice Peter Silva Silva, resigned.

Janet Garvin McCabe,
of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, vice Regina McCarthy, resigned.

Appendix C—Checklist of White House Press Releases

The following list contains releases of the Office of the Press Secretary that are neither printed items nor covered by entries in the Digest of Other White House Announcements.

January 2

Statement by the Press Secretary on the Executive order imposing additional sanctions on North Korea

January 3

Transcript of a weekly address by Vice President Joe Biden (dated January 2; embargoed until January 3)

January 5

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

January 6

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Bernadette Meehan on Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Lisa O. Monaco's meeting with President of General Intelligence Prince Khalid bin Bandar bin Abdalaziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia

Fact sheet: U.S.-Mexico High Level Economic Dialogue

January 7

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Fact sheet: Making Homeownership More Accessible and Sustainable

January 8

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by the Press Secretary on the U.S. Olympic Committee's nomination of Boston to bid as host of the 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games

January 9

Transcript of a press gaggle by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Eric H. Schultz

Statement by Council of Economic Advisers Chairman Jason L. Furman on the employment situation in December

Fact sheet: White House Unveils America's College Promise Proposal: Tuition-Free Community College for Responsible Students

Fact sheet: President Obama Announces New Manufacturing Innovation Hub in Knoxville, Tennessee

January 11

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the White House will host a summit on countering violent extremism on February 18

January 12

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 26

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Bernadette Meehan on Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Lisa O. Monaco's meeting with France's Ambassador to the U.S. Gerard Araud

Fact sheet: Safeguarding American Consumers & Families: President Obama Announces New Privacy Protections for the Digital Age

January 13

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by the Press Secretary: Securing Cyberspace: President Obama Announces

New Cybersecurity Legislative Proposal and Other Cybersecurity Efforts

Text of a readout of the President's meeting with congressional leaders

Text of a National Economic Council and Council of Economic Advisers report: Community-Based Broadband Solutions: The Benefits of Competition and Choice for Community Development and High-Speed Internet Access

Fact sheet: Broadband That Works: Promoting Competition & Local Choice in Next-Generation Connectivity

January 14

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Fact sheet: White House Unveils New Steps To Strengthen Working Families Across America

January 15

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by the Press Secretary on the publication of changes to U.S. regulatory policy toward Cuba by the Department of the Treasury and the Department of Commerce

January 16

Text of a Department of the Treasury and Department of Transportation report: Recommendations of the Build America Investment Initiative Interagency Working Group

Fact sheet: Increasing Investment in U.S. Roads, Ports, and Drinking Water Systems Through Innovative Financing

Fact sheet: U.S.-United Kingdom Cybersecurity Cooperation

January 17

Fact sheet: A Simpler, Fairer Tax Code That Responsibly Invests in Middle Class Families

January 19

Statement by the Press Secretary: White House Announces Guests in First Lady's Box—State of the Union Address

January 20

Fact sheet: Middle Class Economics for the 21st Century—Helping Working Families Get Ahead

Excerpts of the President's State of the Union Address

Advance text of the President's State of the Union Address

January 21

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Text: The Federal Resources Playbook for Registered Apprenticeship (released by the Department of Labor)

Fact sheet: Partnering With Employers To Equip Hardworking Americans With the Skills They Need To Advance Into Better-Paying Jobs

January 22

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Text of a Council of Economic Advisers report: The Economics of Early Childhood Investments

Fact sheet: Helping All Working Families With Young Children Afford Child Care

January 23

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Fact sheet: President Obama Hosts Over 200 Mayors From Across the Country at the White House

January 25

Fact sheet: U.S. and India Climate and Clean Energy Cooperation

January 26

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest, Secretary of Commerce Penny S. Pritzker, Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Benjamin J. Rhodes, Counselor to the President John D. Podesta, and MasterCard Inc.

President and Chief Executive Officer Ajay Banga

Statement by the Press Secretary on the parliamentary elections in Greece

Statement by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Eric H. Schultz on the Congressional Budget Office report on the Federal budget and the national economy

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Bernadette Meehan on Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Lisa O. Monaco's travel to Afghanistan

Fact sheet: Fostering a Cleaner and More Sustainable Energy Future in the Caribbean

January 27

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest and Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Benjamin J. Rhodes

Fact sheet: President's 2016 Budget Proposes Historic Investment To Combat Antibiotic-Resistant Bacteria To Protect Public Health

January 28

Transcript of a press briefing by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Eric H. Schultz

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Bernadette Meehan on Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Lisa O. Monaco's meeting with Minister of the Interior Bernard Cazeneuve of France

January 29

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Bernadette Meehan on the White House Forum on Combating Human Trafficking in Supply Chains

Fact sheet: Promoting Prosperity, Security, and Good Governance in Central America

January 30

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by Council of Economic Advisers Chairman Jason L. Furman on the advance estimate of GDP for the fourth quarter of 2014

Fact sheet: President Obama's Precision Medicine Initiative

February 2

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest, Office of Management and Budget Director Shaun L.S. Donovan, Council of Economic Advisers Chairman Jason L. Furman, Domestic Policy Council Director Cecilia Muñoz, and National Economic Council Director Jeffrey D. Zients on the President's fiscal year 2016 budget

February 3

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Lisa O. Monaco: Update on Implementation of Signals Intelligence Reform and Issuance of PPD–28

February 4

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

February 5

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Text of an Office of National Drug Control Policy fact sheet: Administration Proposes Critical Investments To Tackle Prescription Drug Abuse, Heroin Use, and Overdose Deaths

February 6

Transcript of a press gaggle by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Eric H. Schultz

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Bernadette Meehan on International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation

Statement by Council of Economic Advisers Chairman Jason L. Furman on the employment situation in January

Text of the 2015 National Security Strategy

Fact sheet: The 2015 National Security Strategy

Advance text of remarks by National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice on the 2015 National Security Strategy at the Brookings Institution

February 10

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Bernadette Meehan on the conviction of Malaysian opposition leader Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim

Fact sheet: Obama Administration Announces Initiative To Scale Up Investment in Clean Energy Innovation

February 11

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Text of a proposed joint resolution submitted to Congress by the President: To authorize the limited use of the United States Armed Forces against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant

Fact sheet: Progress in Our Ebola Response at Home and Abroad

February 12

Transcript of a press gaggle by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Eric H. Schultz

Statement by the Press Secretary on the situation in Ukraine

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 203

February 13

Statement by the Press Secretary: White House Report: Investing in Our Future: Helping Teachers and Schools Prepare Our Children for College and Careers

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Bernadette Meehan on the recent terrorist attacks in West Africa

White House report: Investing in Our Future: Helping Teachers and Schools Prepare Our Children for College and Careers

Text of a Department of Commerce and Department of Homeland Security report: Supporting Travel and Tourism To Grow Our Economy and Create More Jobs

Fact sheet: White House Summit on Cybersecurity and Consumer Protection

Fact sheet: Executive Order Promoting Private Sector Cybersecurity Information Sharing

Fact sheet: Supporting Travel and Tourism To Grow Our Economy by Improving the Arrivals Experience for International Travelers to the U.S.

February 14

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Bernadette Meehan on the terrorist attacks in Copenhagen, Denmark

February 15

Statement by the Press Secretary on the killing of Egyptian citizens in Libya by terrorists affiliated with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization

Fact sheet: Promoting Economic Competitiveness While Safeguarding Privacy, Civil Rights, and Civil Liberties in Domestic Use of Unmanned Aircraft Systems

February 16

Transcript of a background teleconference call by senior administration officials previewing the White House Summit on Countering Violent Extremism

February 17

Statement by the Press Secretary on the U.S. District Court opinion in *Texas, et al.* v. *United States*

February 18

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Fact sheet: The White House Summit on Countering Violent Extremism

February 19

Transcript of a press gaggle by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Eric H. Schultz

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Bernadette Meehan on Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Lisa O. Monaco's meeting with Minister of the Interior Bernard Cazeneuve of France

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Bernadette Meehan on National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice's meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs Martin Lidegaard of Denmark

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Bernadette Meehan on National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice's meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs Sameh Hassan Shoukry of Egypt

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Bernadette Meehan on National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice's meeting with National Security Adviser Yossi Cohen of Israel

Text of a White House blog post by Council of Economic Advisers Chairman Jason L. Furman: 2015 Economic Report of the President

Fact sheet: Launching the Every Kid in a Park Initiative and Designating New National Monuments

February 20

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by the Press Secretary on the West Coast ports labor agreement

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Bernadette Meehan on National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice's meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs Mohamed Elahadi Dayri of Libya

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Bernadette Meehan on National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice's meeting with United Nations Special Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Bernadette Meehan on National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice's meeting with Foreign Secretary Subrahmanyam Jaishankar of India

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Bernadette Meehan on National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice's meeting with Minister of Interior and Narcotics Control Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan of Pakistan

February 23

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Text of a Council of Economic Advisers report: The Effects of Conflicted Investment Advice on Retirement Savings

Fact sheet: Middle Class Economics: Strengthening Retirement Security by Cracking Down on Backdoor Payments and Hidden Fees

February 24

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

February 25

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Bernadette Meehan on National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice's meeting with State Councilor Yang Jiechi of China

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Bernadette Meehan on recent attacks by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization

Fact sheet: Cyber Threat Intelligence Integration Center

February 26

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Bernadette Meehan on National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice's video teleconference with National Security Adviser Kim Darroch of the United Kingdom, National Security Adviser Jacques Audibert of France, National Security Adviser Christoph Heusgen of Germany, and National Security Adviser Armando Varricchio of Italy

Fact sheet: White House Highlights Record U.S. Exports, Announces New Actions To Help More Rural Businesses Export

February 27

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by the Press Secretary on reauthorization of the collection of bulk telephony metadata under section 215 of the USA PATRIOT Act

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 33

Statement by Council of Economic Advisers Chairman Jason L. Furman on the second estimate of GDP for the fourth quarter of 2014

March 2

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Advance text of remarks by National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice at the America Israel Public Affairs Committee Policy Conference

March 3

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Fact sheet: President Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama Announce New Whole of Government Initiative, Let Girls Learn

Fact sheet: Support for the Alliance for Prosperity in the Northern Triangle

March 4

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 240

March 5

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by the Press Secretary: My Brother's Keeper Task Force: One-Year Progress Report to the President

White House report: My Brother's Keeper Task Force: One-Year Progress Report to the President

March 6

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by Council of Economic Advisers Chairman Jason L. Furman on the employment situation in February

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Bernadette Meehan on the Special Assistant to the President and White House Coordinator for the Middle East, North Africa, and the Gulf Region

March 7

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 431

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Bernadette Meehan on the death of Sgt. Andrew J. Doiron of the Canadian Armed Forces

Advance text of the President's remarks commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Selma to Montgomery marches for voting rights in Selma, AL

March 9

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Transcript of a background conference call by senior administration officials on the President's Executive order on Venezuela

Statement by the Press Secretary on the President's Executive order on Venezuela

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Bernadette Meehan on Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Com-

munications Benjamin J. Rhodes's meeting with Assyrian Christian Bishops

Fact sheet: President Obama Launches New TechHire Initiative

Fact sheet: Venezuela Executive Order

March 10

Transcript of a press gaggle by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Eric H. Schultz

Fact sheet: A Student Aid Bill of Rights: Taking Action To Ensure Strong Consumer Protections for Student Loan Borrowers

March 11

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by the Press Secretary on approval of a new International Monetary Fund program for Ukraine

March 12

Transcript of a press gaggle by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Eric H. Schultz

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Bernadette Meehan on National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice's meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs Frank-Walter Steinmeier of Germany

Text of a Department of Energy report: Wind Vision: A New Era for Wind Power in the United States

Fact sheet: Wind Vision Report Highlights Long Term Benefits of Investing in America's Wind Energy Industry

March 13

Transcript of a press gaggle by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Eric H. Schultz

March 16

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

March 17

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Bernadette Meehan on National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice's meeting with Secretary General of the National Security Secretariat Shotaro Yachi of Japan

Fact sheet: House Republican Budget Resolution: Same Failed Top-Down Economics

March 18

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by the Press Secretary on the terrorist attack at the National Bardo Museum in Tunisia

White House and Department of Commerce report: Supply Chain Innovation: Strengthening America's Small Manufacturers

Fact sheet: President Obama Launches Competition for New Textiles-Focused Manufacturing Innovation Institute; New White House Supply Chain Innovation Initiative; and Funding To Support Small Manufacturers

March 19

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest and Senior Adviser to the President Brian C. Deese

Fact sheet: Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions in the Federal Government and Across the Supply Chain

March 20

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Announces New "Call to Arts" Initiative as Part of his National Call to Service

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 1213

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Bernadette Meehan on the situation in Yemen

March 22

Statement by the Press Secretary: Key Facts and Reports: The Fifth Anniversary of the Affordable Care Act

White House report: Accomplishments of the Affordable Care Act: A 5th Year Anniversary Report (dated March 23)

Text of a Council of Economic Advisers report: The Affordable Care Act at Five: Progress on Coverage, Costs, and Quality

March 23

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Fact sheet: President Obama Announces Over $240 Million in New STEM Commitments at the 2015 White House Science Fair

Fact sheet: New Details: President Obama Hosts 5th White House Science Fair

Fact sheet: Next Steps in Delivering Fast, Affordable Broadband

Fact sheet: President Obama To Announce New Steps To Attract Foreign Investors and Create Jobs Through the Continued Expansion of the SelectUSA Initiative

Advance text of remarks by White House Chief of Staff Denis R. McDonough at the J Street National Conference

March 24

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Bernadette Meehan on National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice's meeting with former President Moaz al-Khatib of the Syrian Opposition Coalition

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Bernadette Meehan on Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Lisa O. Monaco's meeting with Minister of the Interior Nuhad al-Mashnuq of Lebanon

March 25

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by the Press Secretary on House of Representatives passage of budget legislation

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Bernadette Meehan on National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice's meeting with Minister of Defense Aliyu Mohammed Gusau of Nigeria

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Bernadette Meehan on the situation in Yemen

March 26

Transcript of a press gaggle by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Eric H. Schultz

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Bernadette Meehan on National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice's meeting with Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization

Fact sheet: Progress Toward Building a Safer, Stronger Financial System and Protecting Consumers From Unfair and Abusive Practices

March 27

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Honors Outstanding Science, Mathematics, and Engineering Mentors

Statement by the Press Secretary on Senate passage of budget legislation

Statement by the Press Secretary on Mexico's carbon emissions policy announcement

Statement by Council of Economic Advisers Chairman Jason L. Furman on the third estimate of GDP for the fourth quarter of 2014

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Bernadette Meehan on National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice's meeting with Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs Philip Hammond of the United Kingdom

White House report: National Action Plan for Combating Antibiotic-Resistant Bacteria

Fact sheet: Obama Administration Releases National Action Plan To Combat Antibiotic-Resistant Bacteria

March 30

Transcript of a press gaggle by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Eric H. Schultz

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that Kenya will cohost the Global Entrepreneurship Summit in July

March 31

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Grants Commutations

Text of the U.S. Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) submission to the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change

Fact sheet: U.S. Reports Its 2025 Emissions Target to the UNFCCC

April 1

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Transcript of an on-the-record conference call by Special Assistant to the President and Cybersecurity Coordinator Michael Daniel and Department of the Treasury Office of Foreign Assets Control Acting Director John E. Smith on the Executive order on malicious cyber-enabled activities

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 1527

Fact sheet: Executive Order Blocking the Property of Certain Persons Engaging in Significant Malicious Cyber-Enabled Activities

April 2

Transcript of a background press call by senior administration officials on the framework agreement regarding Iran's nuclear program

Statement by the Press Secretary on the terrorist attack at Garissa University College in Garissa, Kenya

Text: Parameters for a Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action Regarding the Islamic Republic of Iran's Nuclear Program

Fact sheet: Training Americans for Better Jobs and Higher Wages To Grow the Economy

April 3

Transcript of a press gaggle by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Eric H. Schultz

Statement by Council of Economic Advisers Chairman Jason L. Furman on the employment situation in March

Fact sheet: Administration Announces Actions To Drive Growth in Solar Energy and Train Workers for Clean-Energy Jobs

April 6

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest and Secretary of Energy Ernest J. Moniz

April 7

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Transcript of an on-the-record conference call by Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Benjamin J. Rhodes and National Security Council Senior Director for Western Hemisphere Affairs Ricardo Zuñiga on the President's travel to Jamaica and Panama

Statement by the Press Secretary on proposed legislation to replace the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001

Fact sheet: Administration Announces Actions To Protect Communities From the Impacts of Climate Change

April 8

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

April 9

Fact sheet: U.S.-CARICOM Summit—Deepening Energy Cooperation

Fact sheet: The President's Young Leaders of the Americas Initiative and Programs To

Support Youth Development in Central America and the Caribbean

April 10

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest and Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Benjamin J. Rhodes

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Bernadette Meehan on the situation in the Yarmouk refugee camp in Syria

Fact sheet: U.S. Cooperation With Central America; Meeting With Members of the Central America Integration System (SICA)

April 11

Statement by the Press Secretary on the conviction and sentencing of U.S. citizen Mohamed Soltan in Egypt

Fact sheet: U.S. Participation in the 7th Summit of the Americas

April 13

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

April 14

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by the Press Secretary on the proposed rescission of Cuba's designation as a state sponsor of terrorism

Text of a Department of Labor blog post by Secretary of Labor Thomas E. Perez and National Economic Council Director Jeffrey D. Zients: Today's Important Step To Strengthen Retirement Security

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Bernadette Meehan on National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice's meeting with Chairperson Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma of the African Union

Fact sheet: U.S.-Iraq Cooperation

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Transcript of a press gaggle by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Eric H. Schultz

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Bernadette Meehan on Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Benjamin J. Rhodes's meeting with representatives of the Iraqi Christian community

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Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 2

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Bernadette Meehan on National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice's meeting with Prime Minister Karim Masimov of Kazakhstan

April 19

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Bernadette Meehan on the purported killing of Ethiopian Christians in Libya by terrorists affiliated with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization

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Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

April 21

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Bernadette Meehan on White House Chief of Staff Denis R. McDonough and Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Benjamin J. Rhodes's meeting with Armenian American leaders

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Bernadette Meehan on National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice's meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs Mevlut Cavusoglu of Turkey

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Transcript of a press gaggle by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Eric H. Schultz

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Bernadette Meehan on the deci-

sion by Saudi Arabia and its coalition partners to conclude Operation Decisive Storm in Yemen

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Bernadette Meehan on National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice's meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs Nikolaos Kotzias of Greece

Fact sheet: Celebrating Earth Day With New Steps To Protect People, Places, and Local Economies From Climate Change

April 23

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by the Press Secretary on the deaths of Warren Weinstein and Giovanni Lo Porto

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Bernadette Meehan on National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice's meeting with United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres

April 24

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Transcript of an on-the-record conference call by Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Benjamin J. Rhodes, Deputy National Security Adviser for International Economics Caroline M. Atkinson, and National Security Council Senior Director for Asian Affairs Evan S. Medeiros on the upcoming state visit of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan

White House report: President Obama's Upskill Initiative

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Bernadette Meehan on National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice's meeting with former Prime Minister Sa'ad al-Din al-Hariri of Lebanon

Fact sheet: Administration Announces New Commitments in Support of President Obama's Upskill Initiative To Empower Workers with Education and Training

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Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Bernadette Meehan on the earthquake in Nepal

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Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Bernadette Meehan regarding the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia

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Fact sheet: U.S.-Japan Cooperation for a More Prosperous and Stable World

Fact sheet: New Promise Zones Building Stronger Ladders of Opportunity (released by the Department of Housing and Urban Development)

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Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by Council of Economic Advisers Chairman Jason L. Furman on the advance estimate of GDP for the first quarter of 2015

April 30

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed S. 535

Statement by National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice on the nomination of Gayle E. Smith to be Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development

Fact sheet: Spreading the Joy of Reading to More Children and Young Adults

May 1

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

May 2

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Bernadette Meehan on Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and

Counterterrorism Lisa O. Monaco's meeting with U.N. Special Envoy for Yemen Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed

May 4

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Bernadette Meehan on Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Benjamin J. Rhodes's meeting with Speaker of the Lower House of Parliament Thura Shwe Mann of Burma

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Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by the Press Secretary on congressional passage of a budget resolution for fiscal year 2016

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Bernadette Meehan on National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice's meeting with President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni of Uganda

May 6

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

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Statement by the Press Secretary: White House Report: Making College Affordable for Millions of Americans

Statement by the Press Secretary on the formation of Israel's new Government

White House report: Making College More Affordable for Millions of Americans

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Transcript of a press gaggle by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Eric H. Schultz

Statement by Council of Economic Advisers Chairman Jason L. Furman on the employment situation in April

May 9

Statement by the Press Secretary on the World Health Organization's declaration of the end of the Ebola outbreak in Liberia

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Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Transcript of an on-the-record conference call by Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Benjamin J. Rhodes, National Security Adviser to the Vice President Colin H. Kahl, and National Security Council Coordinator for the Middle East, North Africa, and the Gulf Region Robert Malley previewing the President's meetings with Gulf Cooperation Council representatives at Camp David, MD

Fact sheet: The United States' Investment in Emerging Global Entrepreneurs

May 12

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Bernadette Meehan on the resumption of Cyprus settlement talks

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Bernadette Meehan on U.S. journalist Austin B. Tice's 1,000th day in captivity in Syria

Fact sheet: The White House Summit on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders

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Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest and Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Benjamin J. Rhodes on the President's meetings with Gulf Cooperation Council representatives at Camp David, MD

Text: Annex to U.S.-Gulf Cooperation Council Camp David Joint Statement

May 15

Transcript of a press briefing by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Eric H. Schultz

Text of a White House blog post by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest: The President and Vice President's 2014 Financial Disclosure Forms

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Bernadette Meehan on Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Benjamin J. Rhodes's meeting with ASEAN officials

Fact sheet: The President's Global Development Council's Second Report

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Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Bernadette Meehan on the U.S. counterterrorism operation in Syria against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization

Statement by National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice on lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender rights

Fact sheet: Promoting and Protecting the Human Rights of LGBT Persons: A United States Government Priority

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Transcript of a press gaggle by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Eric H. Schultz

Text: Final Report of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing (released by the Department of Justice)

Text of a White House blog post by U.S. Chief Technology Officer Megan Smith and Deputy Assistant to the President for Urban Affairs, Justice, and Opportunity Roy L. Austin, Jr.: Launching the Police Data Initiative

Text of a Law Enforcement Equipment Working Group report: Recommendations Pursuant to Executive Order 13688: Federal Support for Local Law Enforcement Equipment Acquisition

Fact sheet: Creating Opportunity for All Through Stronger, Safer Communities

May 19

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed S. 665

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 2252

May 20

Transcript of a press gaggle by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Eric H. Schultz

Statement by the Press Secretary: White House Report: The National Security Implications of a Changing Climate

White House report: Findings From Select Federal Reports: The National Security Implications of a Changing Climate

May 21

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

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May 22

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 606, H.R. 651, H.R. 1075, H.R. 1191, S. 1124

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Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 2496

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Statement by the Press Secretary on the Presidential election in Poland

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Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

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Transcript of a press gaggle by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Eric H. Schultz

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Transcript of a press gaggle by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Eric H. Schultz

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing the White House Conference on Aging

May 29

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 1690, H.R. 2353, and S. 178

Statement by Council of Economic Advisers Chairman Jason L. Furman on the second estimate of GDP for the first quarter of 2015

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Statement by the Press Secretary on congressional passage of the USA FREEDOM Act

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Fact Sheet: The President's Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative

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Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 2048

Fact sheet: Over 150 Animal and Health Stakeholders Join White House Effort To Combat Antibiotic Resistance

June 3

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Bernadette Meehan on National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice's meeting with Prime Minister Aleksandar Vucic of Serbia

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Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Transcript of an on-the-record conference call by Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Benjamin J. Rhodes, Deputy National Security Adviser for International Economics Caroline M. Atkinson, and Senior Director for European Affairs Charles A. Kupchan on the President's travel to Germany for the G–7 summit

Text of a White House blog post by Council of Economic Advisers Chairman Jason L. Furman and Senior Economist Matthew A. Fiedler: New Data and Updated Report Show Medicaid Is Expanding Insurance Coverage, With Major Benefits to States' Citizens and Economies

Text of a Council of Economic Advisers report: Missed Opportunities: The Consequences of State Decisions Not To Expand Medicaid

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Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by Council of Economic Advisers Chairman Jason L. Furman on the employment situation in May

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Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest on the G–7 summit

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Text: Annex to the G–7 Leaders' Declaration

Fact sheet: The 2015 G–7 Summit at Schloss Elmau, Germany

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Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by the Press Secretary: The President's Speech to the Catholic Health Association on Health Care in America

Statement by the Press Secretary on the Supreme Court's decision in *Zivotofsky* v. *Kerry*

Fact sheet: Health Care Reform, a Reality for America: What the Affordable Care Act Is Doing for American Families

Fact sheet: Launching a Public-Private Partnership To Empower Climate-Resilient Developing Nations

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Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Transcript of a teleconference press briefing by Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Benjamin J. Rhodes, National Security Council Senior Director for Iran, Iraq, Syria, and the Gulf States Jeff Prescott, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs Elissa Slotkin, and Deputy Special Presidential Envoy for the Global Coalition To Counter ISIL Brett H. McGurk

Statement by the Press Secretary on U.S. strategy to counter the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization

Fact sheet: Administration Announces Actions To Bring Jobs and Clean Energy to Rural America

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Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing the 2015–2016 National Finalists for the White House Fellows program

Fact sheet: The White House and Small Business Administration Launch Startup in a Day Initiative and Prize Competition

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Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed S. 802

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Ned Price on National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice's meeting with Central Military Commission Vice Chairman General Fan Changlong of China

Fact sheet: New Commitments in Support of the President's Nation of Makers Initiative

Fact sheet: Supporting Workers, Farmers, and Communities Suffering From Drought

Fact sheet: U.S. Government Efforts To Address Bias-Motivated Violence Against the LGBT Community Around the World

June 15

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed S. 1568

June 16

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Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Edward C. "Ned" Price on National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice's meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs Yun Byung-se of South Korea

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Edward C. "Ned" Price on the death of Al Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula leader Nasser al-Wuhayshi

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Edward C. "Ned" Price on National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice's meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs K. Shanmugam of Singapore

Text of an Office of Management and Budget report: Government-Wide Funding for Clean Energy Technology

Fact sheet: Obama Administration Announces More Than $4 Billion in Private Sector Commitments and Executive Actions To Scale Up Investment in Clean Energy Innovation

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Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

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Transcript of a press gaggle by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Eric H. Schultz

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Transcript of a press gaggle by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Eric H. Schultz

June 22

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by the Press Secretary: Obama Administration Releases Report on the Health and Economic Benefits of Global Action on Climate Change

Statement by the Press Secretary: Expected Attendees at the White House Iftar Dinner

Text of an Environmental Protection Agency Report: Climate Change in the United States: Benefits of Global Action

June 23

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Fact sheet: Obama Administration Announces Actions To Protect Communities From the Health Impacts of Climate Change at White House Summit

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Statement by the Press Secretary on the introduction in Congress of the Voting Rights Advancement Act of 2015

Statement by Council of Economic Advisers Chairman Jason L. Furman on the third estimate of GDP for the first quarter of 2015

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Edward C. "Ned" Price on National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice's meeting with State Councilor Yang Jiechi of China

White House report: Report on U.S. Hostage Policy

Fact sheet: U.S. Government Hostage Policy

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Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Transcript of a teleconference press briefing by Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Benjamin J. Rhodes and National Security Council Senior Director for Western Hemisphere Affairs Mark Feierstein on the upcoming visit of President Dilma Rousseff of Brazil

Statement by the Press Secretary on the U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs* v. *Inclusive Communities Project, Inc.*

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Edward C. "Ned" Price on Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Lisa O. Monaco's meeting with U.N. Special Envoy for Yemen Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed

Fact sheet: ConnectED: Two Years of Delivering Opportunity to K–12 Schools & Libraries

Fact sheet: The Supreme Court Upholds Critical Part of the Affordable Care Act: What You Need To Know About the Affordable Care Act

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Transcript of a press gaggle by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Eric H. Schultz

Statement by the Press Secretary on the terrorist attacks in France, Kuwait, and Tunisia

June 29

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 2146 and H.R. 1295

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Edward C. "Ned" Price on the death of Prosecutor-General Hisham Barakat of Egypt in a terrorist attack in Cairo, Egypt

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Statement by Senior Adviser to the President Brian C. Deese on China's Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) submission to the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Edward C. "Ned" Price on National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice's meeting with Foreign Secretary Subrahmanyam Jaishankar of India

Fact sheet: Middle Class Economics Rewarding Hard Work by Restoring Overtime Pay

Fact sheet: State-by-State Breakdowns of Workers Affected by Department of Labor's Proposed Overtime Regulation

Fact sheet: The United States and Brazil—A Mature and Multi-Faceted Partnership

Fact sheet: The Export-Import Bank: Supporting American Exports and American Workers in Every State Across the Country

Appendix D—Presidential Documents Published in the *Federal Register*

This appendix lists Presidential documents released by the Office of the Press Secretary and published in the Federal Register. *The texts of the documents are printed in the* Federal Register *(*F.R.*) at the citations listed below. The documents are also printed in title 3 of the Code of Federal Regulations and in the Compilation of Presidential Documents.*

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9228	Jan. 16	Martin Luther King, Jr., Federal Holiday, 2015	3449
9229	Jan. 30	American Heart Month, 2015	6419
9230	Jan. 30	National African American History Month, 2015	6421
9231	Jan. 30	National Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month, 2015	6423
9232	Feb. 19	Establishment of the Browns Canyon National Monument	9975
9233	Feb. 19	Establishment of the Pullman National Monument	10315
9234	Feb. 24	Establishment of the Honouliuli National Monument	11069
9235	Feb. 27	American Red Cross Month, 2015	11845
9236	Feb. 27	Irish-American Heritage Month, 2015	11847
9237	Feb. 27	National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month, 2015	11849
9238	Feb. 27	Women's History Month, 2015	11851
9239	Feb. 27	National Consumer Protection Week, 2015	11853
9240	Feb. 27	Read Across America Day, 2015	11855
9241	Mar. 13	National Poison Prevention Week, 2015	14287
9242	Mar. 24	Greek Independence Day: A National Day of Celebration of Greek and American Democracy, 2015	16249
9243	Mar. 30	Cesar Chavez Day, 2015	18073
9244	Mar. 30	Education and Sharing Day, U.S.A., 2015	18075
9245	Mar. 31	National Child Abuse Prevention Month, 2015	18301
9246	Mar. 31	National Financial Capability Month, 2015	18303
9247	Apr. 1	National Cancer Control Month, 2015	18509
9248	Apr. 1	National Donate Life Month, 2015	18511
9249	Apr. 1	National Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month, 2015	18513
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9251	Apr. 6	National Public Health Week, 2015	19191
9252	Apr. 8	National Former Prisoner of War Recognition Day, 2015	19867
9253	Apr. 10	National Volunteer Week, 2015	20403
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9256	Apr. 14	Day of Remembrance for President Abraham Lincoln	21151
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9258	Apr. 20	National Park Week, 2015	22869
9259	Apr. 21	Earth Day, 2015	22871
9260	Apr. 27	Workers Memorial Day, 2015	24777
9261	Apr. 30	Jewish American Heritage Month, 2015	25571
9262	Apr. 30	National Building Safety Month, 2015	25573
9263	Apr. 30	National Foster Care Month, 2015	25575
9264	Apr. 30	National Physical Fitness and Sports Month, 2015	25577
9265	Apr. 30	Law Day, U.S.A., 2015	25579
9266	Apr. 30	Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, 2015	25889
9267	Apr. 30	National Mental Health Awareness Month, 2015	25891
9268	Apr. 30	Older Americans Month, 2015	25893
9269	Apr. 30	Loyalty Day, 2015	25895
9270	May 1	National Small Business Week, 2015	26177
9271	May 1	Public Service Recognition Week, 2015	26179
9272	May 4	National Charter Schools Week, 2015	26433
9273	May 4	National Teacher Appreciation Day and National Teacher Appreciation Week, 2015	26435
9274	May 6	National Day of Prayer, 2015	26817
9275	May 7	Military Spouse Appreciation Day, 2015	27235
9276	May 8	National Defense Transportation Day and National Transportation Week, 2015	27237
9277	May 8	Peace Officers Memorial Day and Police Week, 2015	27239
9278	May 8	Mother's Day, 2015	27241
9279	May 11	National Women's Health Week, 2015	27849
9280	May 15	National Safe Boating Week, 2015	29193
9281	May 15	Emergency Medical Services Week, 2015	29195
9282	May 15	World Trade Week, 2015	29197
9283	May 15	Armed Forces Day, 2015	29199
9284	May 18	50th Anniversary of Head Start	29525
9285	May 20	National Maritime Day, 2015	30127
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9287	May 22	Prayer for Peace, Memorial Day, 2015	30329
9288	May 29	African-American Music Appreciation Month, 2015	31821
9289	May 29	Great Outdoors Month, 2015	31823
9290	May 29	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Pride Month, 2015	31825
9291	May 29	National Caribbean-American Heritage Month, 2015	31827

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9293	June 11	National Week of Making	34529
9294	June 12	Flag Day and National Flag Week, 2015	34823
9295	June 12	World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, 2015	34825
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13690	Jan. 30	Establishing a Federal Flood Risk Management Standard and a Process for Further Soliciting and Considering Stakeholder Input	6425
13691	Feb. 13	Promoting Private Sector Cybersecurity Information Sharing	9349
13692	Mar. 8	Blocking Property and Suspending Entry of Certain Persons Contributing to the Situation in Venezuela	12747
13693	Mar. 19	Planning for Federal Sustainability in the Next Decade	15871
13694	Apr. 1	Blocking the Property of Certain Persons Engaging in Significant Malicious Cyber-Enabled Activities	18077
13695	May 26	Termination of Emergency With Respect to the Risk of Nuclear Proliferation Created by the Accumulation of a Large Volume of Weapons-Usable Fissile Material in the Territory of the Russian Federation	30331
13696	June 17	2015 Amendments to the Manual for Courts-Martial, United States	35783
13697	June 22	Amendment to Executive Order 11155, Awards for Special Capability in Career and Technical Education	36691
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	Jan. 21	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Terrorists Who Threaten To Disrupt the Middle East Peace Process	3461
	Feb. 2	Order: Sequestration Order for Fiscal Year 2016 Pursuant to Section 251A of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act, as Amended	6645
	Feb. 4	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Situation in or in Relation to Côte d'Ivoire	6647
	Feb. 15	Memorandum: Promoting Economic Competitiveness While Safeguarding Privacy, Civil Rights, and Civil Liberties in Domestic Use of Unmanned Aircraft Systems	9355
	Feb. 19	Memorandum: Delegation of Authority Under the Ukraine Freedom Support Act of 2014	12071
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	Feb. 23	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Libya	9983
	Feb. 25	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Cuba and of the Emergency Authority Relating to the Regulation of the Anchorage and Movement of Vessels	11075
	Feb. 25	Memorandum: Establishment of the Cyber Threat Intelligence Integration Center	11317
	Mar. 3	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Ukraine	12067
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	Mar. 4	Memorandum: Delegation of Authority Pursuant to Section 1209(b)(2) of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015	13479

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	Mar. 25	Memorandum: Delegation of Authority Pursuant to Section 1236(b)(2) of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015	22087
	Mar. 27	Memorandum: Delegation of Authority Under the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015	18517
	Mar. 31	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to South Sudan	18081
	Mar. 31	Memorandum: Delegation of Authority To Transfer Certain Funds in Accordance With Section 610 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as Amended	19869
	Apr. 8	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Somalia	19193
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	Apr. 16	Memorandum: Delegation of Authority To Transfer Certain Funds in Accordance With Section 610 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as Amended	25207
	Apr. 29	Memorandum: Delegation of Authority Under Section 506(a)(1) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961	27555
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	May 7	Memorandum: Delegation of Authority Pursuant to Section 302(b) of the Sean and David Goldman International Child Abduction Prevention and Return Act of 2014	32849
	May 8	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Central African Republic	27067
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	June 10	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Actions and Policies of Certain Members of the Government of Belarus and Other Persons To Undermine Belarus's Democratic Process or Institutions	34021
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	June 19	Memorandum: Delegation of Authority Pursuant to Section 8 of the United States-Israel Strategic Partnership Act of 2014	42999
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